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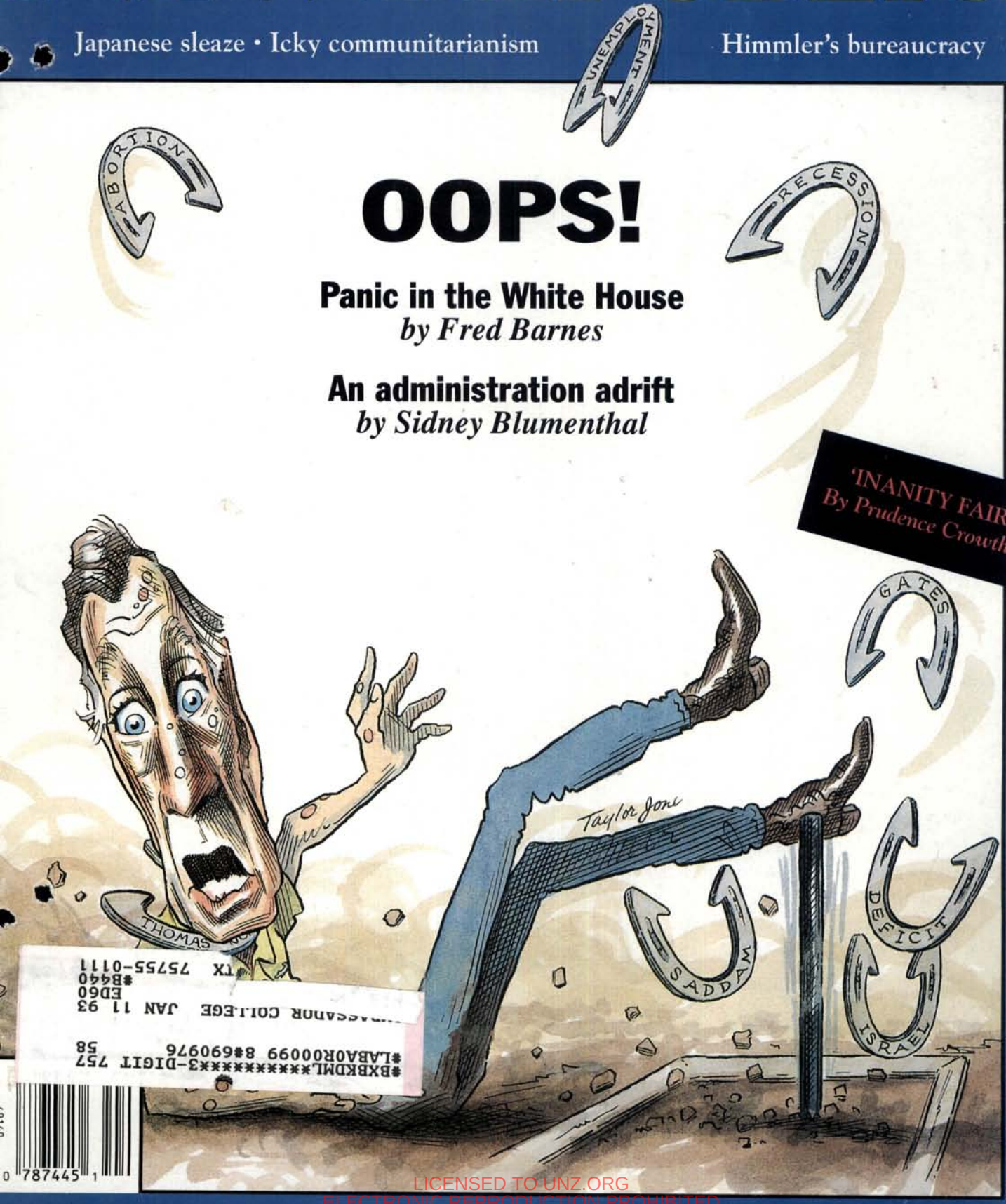

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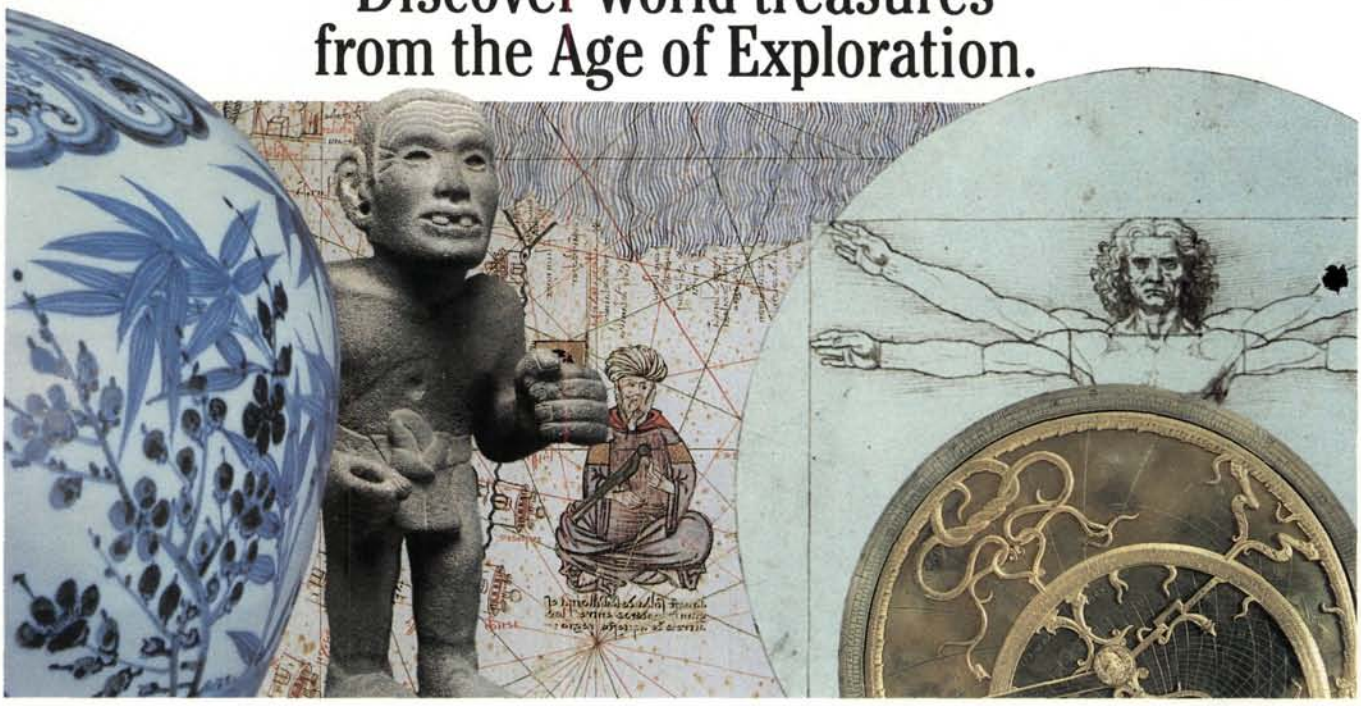

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FROM WASHINGTON

Costume jewels

"I prefer the term boat rather than yacht, just to get the terminology straight here," says Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island. Chafee is pushing for repeal of the so-called "luxury tax" enacted as part of last year's budget agreement. The tax applies to the purchase of furs and jewels costing over $10,000; cars over $30,000; yachts, er, boats over $100,000; and private airplanes over $250,000. The tax is 10 percent of the excess—e.g., $200 on a $32,000 car.

The origin of the luxury tax is somewhat farcical. When President Bush abandoned his "no new taxes" pledge, he hid his shame by clinging to a strained pledge of "no new increases in income tax rates." One result was increases in excise taxes on gasoline, alcohol, and cigarettes—taxes that hit working people disproportionately. Democrats insisted on balancing these with taxes on items bought by wealthy people disproportionately. The effort is mainly symbolic. Even optimists figure the luxury tax will raise only $1.5 billion over five years.

Now, following an energetic lobbying campaign by boat builders, imported car dealers, and so on, even some Democrats say the scales have fallen from their eyes. Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland says remorsefully, "We thought we were going after the Donald Trumps and the Leona Helmsleys.... It turns out that we're just hurting the Mom and Pop small businesses in Maryland and across the country." The claim is that sales of luxury items are plummeting, jobs are being destroyed, and government revenues are actually being reduced as a result.

It's certainly true that no one designing a rational tax system from scratch would include an item like this one. As Chafee says, "Somebody can spend $250,000 and build a second home, a ski lodge in Vail, and not pay a nickel, but if they buy a $150,000 boat they pay a tax. Now, does that make sense?" No, it does not make sense. With all the unfairness in the world, unfairness to buyers of pleasure boats compared with buyers of ski condos may not touch your heartstrings. But the economic point is valid: this is a silly way to go about taxing the rich. The IRS has been forced to grapple with questions like: What if someone buys a pair of fancy earrings one at a time? Metaphysical puzzles like this one usually indicate a flawed tax concept. Should a person's contribution to the general fisc turn on whether she buys earrings or designer dresses?

Trouble is, the sensible way of making affluent people bear more of the tax burden—raising income tax rates—is politically foreclosed. And the luxury tax was a quid pro quo for new taxes and spending program cuts that hit working people directly, and that nobody is proposing to repeal. Furthermore, the supposedly dire effects of the luxury tax are being grossly exaggerated.

Any tax depresses the economic activity being taxed. That's one of the unfortunate things about taxes. And that is why—unless you are purposely trying to discourage something, like smoking—the best taxes are ones, like the income tax, that diffuse the burden over as wide a range of economic activity as possible.

However, when wealthy people are deterred from buying expensive jewelry or fancy cars and boats, the money doesn't disappear from the economy. Only two things can happen to that money: either it gets spent on something else, or it gets saved. If the money is spent on something else, it will create jobs and generate tax revenues. Maybe more jobs and tax revenues than if the money was spent on luxury goods, maybe less. No one can say—although if someone buys a $20,000 American-made Buick instead of a $40,000 imported BMW, the answer is probably "more."

If the money is saved—well, that is something we are also supposed to be encouraging, is it not? More saving means more money available for productive investment. In fact, you could make the same case for the luxury tax that many conservatives make for their cherished capital gains tax cut: it will reward wealthy people for consuming less and saving and investing more. I think the government should attempt to be as neutral as possible in affecting people's economic decisions, to let the free market work. But somehow advocates of the capital gains cut don't feel that way, at least where the issue is a break for investments rather than a small penalty on consumption.

Current sufferings in luxury industries obviously are caused less by the luxury tax than by the recession, the collapse of especially glitz-heavy businesses like real estate, and the general deflashization of America in the 1990s. Nevertheless, luxury tax opponents have studies purporting to show the effect of the tax itself.

You would think that an organization self-described as "a coalition of BMW, Ferrari, Jaguar, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, and Rolls-Royce dealers" would have enough sense of irony not to name itself the "Federation Against Inequitable and Regressive Taxation" (FAIRTAX—get it?), no matter how sincerely it believed in the justice of its cause. But no. FAIRTAX commissioned a consultant's study that purports to show that the luxury tax has reduced sales of cars costing over $30,000 by 20 percent. This, the study concludes, will lead to the loss of "at least [redacted]320" jobs and cost the government "at least $135.5 million" this year in lost customs duties, "gas guzzler" taxes, income taxes, and state sales taxes.

Of course the purpose of the customs duty on imported cars and the tax on gas guzzlers is to discourage their purchase, not to raise revenues. These policies may be sensible or stupid, but they are enhanced—not thwarted—by a tax that reduces sales of imported gas guzzlers further still. More important, the figure the consultants primly label "TOTAL COST OF LUXURY TAX"—and calculate with comic exactitude as $135.5 million—omits completely the revenues from the luxury tax. Using the consultant's own buried figures for the average cost of cars subject to the tax ($54,000) and estimated 1991 sales (97,264), the luxury tax on cars will bring in $233.4 million this year—close to double the purported "cost." As for those 3,320 lost jobs, FAIRTAX's consultants figure the luxury tax will prevent 24,316 sales of cars averaging $54,000 each. That's $1.3 billion not spent on BMWs, etc. It's hardly inconceivable that $1.3 billion spent or invested elsewhere will create more than 3,320 jobs.

A study by the minority staff of the congressional Joint Economic Committee, purporting to measure the effect of the tax on boats, planes, and jewelry, commits similar fallacies with greater arrogance. An introduction by Representative Dick Armey of Texas complains that revenue estimates for the luxury tax are "static," and brags that his study offers instead a "comprehensive dynamic analysis."

This dynamic glistening analysis concludes that the luxury tax will "throw more than 9,000 Americans out of work and cost the Federal Government nearly $20 million" in 1991. There are p[redacted]es of dynamic graphs, formulas, and footnotes. In estimating lost sales, the study eagerly notes that there are many "substitutes not subject to the luxury tax." But nowhere do these dynamos acknowledge that substitute purchases will also create jobs and generate tax revenue—a flaw that makes the study worthless.

If this is the best its opponents can do, the luxury tax wins by default.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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Harvard University — JFK School
Debate between RNC Chairman Clay Yeutter and DNC Chairman Ron Brown

NOVEMBER 2
Iowa Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner
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Speakers: Democratic Presidential Candidates

NOVEMBER 2
New Hampshire Democratic Party Mid-Term Convention — Manchester, New Hampshire
Speakers: Democratic Presidential Candidates

92 ELECTION

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CORRESPONDENCE

Succubi & soporifics

To the editors:

In his praise of sleep, Jim Holt ("Zzzzzzzz," October 7) too quickly dismisses the suctorial quality of a succubus. Parenthetically, Mr. Holt educates his reader that, "contrary to widespread belief, there is nothing suctorial about a succubus; the expression derives from the Latin 'to lie under.'"

Mr. Holt's Latin derivation is correct, but perhaps slightly off the mark. A better translation would be "to lie beneath." Surely generations of slumbering men, as well as countless poets, have dreamt of a suctorial succubus. Lest we forget Faustus's famous words when encountering his paramour of excellence, "Her lips suck forth my soul—see where it flies!" If dreams could only be told, wouldn't the heavenly Helen be the quintessence of many a dreaming man's succubus?

RICHARD COWAN
Laguna Beach, California

De Soto's deficits

To the editors:

Tina Rosenberg's mini-hatchet job on Hernando de Soto ("So-So De Soto," October 7) contained lots of sniping at incidentals and little criticism of substance. Of what does Mr. de Soto stand accused? In Ms. Rosenberg's words: "De Soto's intellectual contributions deserve note. He has made a powerful indictment of business-as-usual in the Third World and has focused attention on encouraging entrepreneurism." Now the dirt: he has failed to haul Peru single-handedly out of poverty; he neglects some factors contributing to that poverty; he is a canny political operator, and worst of all—horror of horrors!—he is very popular in American conservative circles.

Mr. de Soto has never claimed he could do it alone, or that education, technical assistance, etc., are irrelevant. What he claims is that the single greatest block to economic progress in Peru is government. Ms. Rosenberg sniffs that "redefining [informals] as entrepreneurs doesn't cure what made them poor," but of course that is not all that Mr. de Soto wants to do. He wants to provide legal protection for their entrepreneurship, which could only help. As for Ms. Rosenberg's contention that "his Other Path is not a path out of poverty and cannot live up to the hopes with which American conservatives have endowed it," surely time will tell. Ms. Rosenberg has certainly offered no reason to oppose it.

ALLEN SALTER
Evanston, Illinois

Bashing back

To the editors:

Regarding Jonathan Rauch's "Thought Crimes" (October 7): just as motivation is a factor in determining the charge and punishment in murder cases, motivation must be used to distinguish between a back alley gay beating and a dispute over a bet. If there is no "hate crime" classification, maximum penalties must be set high enough to deter such actions.

BRIAN MOATS
Boise, Idaho

Race tracks

To the editors:

Stephen Macedo's otherwise excellent article ("Douglass to Thomas," September 30) is marred by his careless observation about "the largely negative role played by Republicans on race since the early 1960s."

The landmark civil rights bill of this century was passed by Congress in 1964. It included the prohibition of racial discrimination in public accommodations, employment, and government funding. I well remember, as a young Republican staff member, listening breathlessly to the crucial Senate roll call to break the Southern Democrat filibuster against bringing the bill to a vote. The bill passed the House 290-130. Eighty percent of House Republicans voted for it; 62 percent of House Democrats voted for it. The bill passed the Senate 73-27. Eighty-one percent of the Republicans voted for it; 67 percent of the Democrats voted for it.

The Republicans had been clamoring for civil rights action for three years, while Democratic President John Kennedy wimped out on his campaign promise to end racial discrimination in federally assisted housing; Democratic Attorney General Robert Kennedy refused to testify on civil rights bills before the House Judiciary Committee; Democratic Governors George Wallace and Orval Faubus defied federal court orders in the South; and Democratic National Committeeman Bull Connor turned his police dogs loose on peaceful civil rights demonstrators in Birmingham.

JOHN MCCLAUGHRY
Kirby, Vermont

The writer is a state senator from Vermont.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 4, 1991

TALKING DIRTY

For all its luridness, absurdity, and brutality, the television trial of Clarence Thomas had at least one laudable side effect. It raised the public's awareness of sexual harassment in the workplace, and may even serve to discourage it in future. As senators not previously known for their concern about women fell over each other to show their sensitivity to the nuances of sexual harassment, men around the country wondered whether they might be guilty of inappropriate conduct themselves. But by also revealing the elasticity of the legal definition of sexual harassment, the hearings could have another effect as well. They could ultimately cause harassment charges to be taken less seriously. Because the legal definition includes any unwanted "verbal conduct" that contributes to an "intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment," it may lead to an outpouring of charges based less upon legitimate claims of harm than upon an increasingly powerful impulse to censor speech merely because it is offensive.

Invented in the 1970s by the feminist legal theorist Catharine MacKinnon, and endorsed in 1986 by the Supreme Court, the "hostile environment" test threatens to trivialize legitimate claims of sexual harassment by equating sexual assaults with pin-up calendars, and by diverting attention from genuine, harmful sex discrimination. It represents a radical new exception to the First Amendment axiom that speech cannot be punished just because it is offensive. Like restrictions on "hate speech," it punishes expression where it should punish harm. This would present a dilemma for civil libertarians if there weren't any other way to protect victims of real harassment. But there is.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 says nothing about sexual harassment, and before the 1970s, courts dismissed the idea that offensive words—without physical, psychological, or economic harm—could add up to sex discrimination under Title VII. But in 1980, influenced by Professor MacKinnon's arguments, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission adopted three tests for deciding whether "unwelcome verbal or physical conduct" violates the Civil Rights Act: first, is it "quid pro quo" behavior that makes submission to sex an implicit or explicit condition of advancement? Second, is it behavior that "unreasonably interferes with an individual's job performance"? And third, is it behavior that creates an "intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment"?

We have no problems with the first two tests. But the third one is another matter. It relies heavily on the ambiguous term "verbal conduct," obscuring the most important distinction in First Amendment doctrine, which insists that the lines between speech and conduct be drawn as precisely as possible. And in upholding the test, the Supreme Court never explained why unpleasant speech that *didn't* interfere with job performance could be regulated in any way. The ambiguous test then became unintelligible. Courts decided that legality of speech would depend, in retrospect, on whether a "reasonable woman" would have found that it created an "intimidating, hostile, or offensive" environment. This turns the First Amendment on its head. The Supreme Court has traditionally protected offensive speech because "one man's vulgarity is another man's lyric." Under the new rules, speech can be banned whenever one man's lyric becomes a reasonable woman's vulgarity. The fact that men and women often find different things funny (not to mention the fact that women themselves find different things funny) makes the "reasonable woman" standard even more perverse.

To prove the point, a federal appeals court found last January that even "well-intentioned compliments" from officemates can count as sexual harassment. An IRS agent in San Mateo, California, asked a fellow agent out to lunch twice, and after she declined, he declared his love in a poignant note praising her "style and elan," but promising to leave her alone if she asked. She sued and—because the court found that a "reasonable woman" would have found the note unwelcome—won. Days later a Florida district judge ordered the owner of

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a shipyard to stop his male welders from displaying pin-up calendars and telling dirty jokes. His logic: "[B]anning sexist speech in the workplace does not censor such speech everywhere and for all time."

These cases are disturbing on two levels. First, they suggest that harassment claims tend to be trivial or imagined, when clearly most of them are not. It is impossible to wade through sexual harassment cases without being shocked by the sordidness—and the extent—of the abuse that many women experience at work. The scatology that runs throughout the opinions would make Long Dong Silver blush. But if men are enjoined by courts from writing unwanted love letters, they will find it much harder to take real harassment seriously.

Second, it's scary to suggest that the rights of expression (including the right to ask for dates) should be less protected at work than at home. Work is where most Americans spend most of their waking hours; they must be free to express themselves verbally without fear of prosecution. Professor MacKinnon is correct when she argues that the logic of the "hostile environment" exception cannot be limited to the workplace, which is why it should apply neither in the office nor outside of it.

The solution to this mess is a definition of sexual harassment that excludes verbal harassment that has no other effect on its recipient than to create an unpleasant working environment. Sexual harassment, as the ACLU argues, should be limited to expression that is directed at a specific employee and that "demonstrably hinders or completely prevents his or her continuing to function as an employee." This would refine the existing test for "unreasonable interference." Either version would cover legitimate claims. As a 1989 note in the *Yale Law Journal* points out, *all* women who have successfully sued their supervisors (not their co-workers) for creating a "hostile environment" have also suffered some tangible economic harm, such as being fired. Dropping the hostile environment standard wouldn't permit real harassment by co-workers either. Even though it rarely presents an economic threat, such assaults often interfere with job performance. The law against sexual harassment would be strengthened, not weakened.

Assume, for example, that Anita Hill's charges are true. She would not need a "hostile environment" test to make her case. She might have trouble proving "quid pro quo" harassment, which occurs, according to the EEOC, when submission to (or rejection of) sexual advances is used as the basis for employment decisions. She concedes that her refusal to date Mr. Thomas and to watch bestiality videos didn't stop her from being promoted on schedule. Ms. Hill could argue, however, that Mr. Thomas's advances "unreasonably interfered" with her job performance. She was sent to the hospital with nervous cramps, told her friends she had become depressed, and eventually left the EEOC because she felt unable to continue. The judge in her case would still have to make a difficult, subjective decision about how much the harassment had interfered with her job, and how much interference is "reasonable." But these are the kinds of murky decisions that judges make every day, and they are far more appropriate than decisions about what a reasonable woman would find offensive.

What would be excluded from the legal definition of sexual harassment if the "hostile environment" test were abandoned? Only sexual expression that is offensive but that has no detectable effect on job performance. That would include most pin-up calendars, most well-intentioned compliments, and even some gross remarks. But trivial complaints like these are unusual. Sexual harassment lawyers say that cases of verbal harassment where the woman cannot prove physical or psychological damage are rarely successful in court, even under the "hostile environment" test.

Abandoning the "hostile environment" test is in the best interest of feminists as well as civil libertarians. The only realistic way to narrow the gap between what reasonable women and men perceive as harassment is to persuade men that unwanted advances can hurt women in tangible ways. A definition of harassment that diverts attention from that question makes relief for women all the more remote.

NOTEBOOK

CONSERVATISM BETRAYED: It's easy to see why Republicans were delighted at Judge Thomas's confirmation. It's not so clear why principled conservatives should be. Last July 1 there was the galvanizing prospect of a black judge arguing on the Supreme Court against clumsy judicial activism in matters of race. There was the chance of a quick mind tackling Senate Democrats on affirmative action, racial discrimination, privacy, *Roe* v. *Wade*. Unlike Messrs. Bork, Souter, or Kennedy, Mr. Thomas couldn't be portrayed as obtuse about the experience of minorities in America. His race, while speaking silently for itself, would liberate him to speak of the views he held about the Constitution. But, from the beginning, all this was abandoned. Mr. Thomas made his race—and not his ideas—the critical factor. President Bush dared a white Senate to vote a black man down. In the hearings, Mr. Thomas said nothing convincing about his constitutional views, recanted his more interesting writings, harped constantly on his class and skin color. The man who was supposed to represent the individual's transcendence of race presented himself merely as the black man who had triumphed over discrimination and poverty. Mr. Thomas's "lynching remark during the last days of the hearings was perhaps the logical end to this strategy. But it was also the end of his conservative integrity.

HEARINGS AID: Last week's strained consensus that the Thomas hearings would turn the gender gap into a chasm quickly degenerated into bathos. As soon as the testimony started, the details of the Thomas-Hill feud

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completely obscured the broader sexual battle lines. Most polls showed little difference in the end between the views of "white males" and the rest of the population on who was fibbing. A *New York Times*/CBS Poll found only 26 percent of women believing Professor Hill, compared with 22 percent of the men. Another platitude dispatched was that the hearings would provide endless agony and embarrassment for black Americans. In fact, the hearings could not have presented the full diversity of middle-class black America more effectively—from the serenity of Anita Hill through the feistiness of Ellen Wells to the priceless apoplectics of John Doggett. Not quite as riveting as Oprah, perhaps, but a little more convincing.

SOUND FAMILIAR?: "Example—Charging Party (CP) alleges that her supervisor made unwelcome sexual advances toward her on frequent occasions while they were alone in his office. No one witnessed the alleged advances. CP's inability to produce eyewitnesses to the harassment does not defeat her claim. The resolution will depend on the credibility of her allegations versus her supervisor. A general denial by the alleged harasser will carry little weight when it is contradicted by other evidence.... Persons with whom she discussed the incident should be interviewed.... A contemporaneous complaint by the victim would be persuasive evidence that the conduct occurred." —*EEOC Policy Guidance on Current Issues of Sexual Harassment*, March 1990

CHENEY'S CHESTNUT: The rationale for excluding gays from the military wears thinner and thinner. Last week the Pentagon's personnel security branch issued a report examining espionage cases since 1945. The conclusion: gays are no more likely to spy than straights. According to the report, seven of 117 Americans who spied or tried to spy for foreign governments were gay. They betrayed their country for the same reason as the other 110: "primarily money, secondarily resentment." This pretty much pulls the rug out from under the Pentagon's regulation that says excluding homosexuals is necessary "to prevent breaches of security," leaving only vague language about the need to maintain discipline and morale. Last week the Canadian military put paid to the latter excuse. Refusing to pander to popular bigotry and drawing a commonsensical distinction between homosexuals (who are welcome) and inappropriate sexual conduct (which is not), the Canadians lifted their ban on gays in the military. So far, their borders seem to be holding.

HATE WATCH: Former Mississippi Representative David Bowen, now executive director of the Council for the National Interest, appeared on the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour" on September 16 to discuss the Israeli loan guarantees. CNI was identified only as a "foreign policy organization dealing in Middle East issues." Not mentioned was Mr. Bowen's appearance a year ago at a convention of the anti-Semitic Liberty Lobby. CNI is, in fact, as Jeff Santis of the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco has pointed out, more than a think tank. It was founded two years ago by two other former representatives, Paul Findley and Pete McCloskey, as an offshoot of the "American Educational Trust." AET's house organ accuses American Jews of being "dual loyalists," "Israel firsters," and "a shadow government." As for Mr. Findley, he recently said that the argument in favor of loan guarantees "plays on the emotional holocaust theme that never seems to leave America's television screens. Viewers can be sure TV schedules in the next few weeks will have more than usual reruns of *Exodus* and other films that keep alive the horrors of the Nazi death camps." What should be kept off TV is Mr. Findley, his fellow kooks, and their various front groups masquerading as think tanks.

PROFSCAM: The crusade against political correctness has been good to Dinesh D'Souza, the author of the timely *Illiberal Education*, whose speaking fee is reported by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to range between $5,000 and $7,500. Should a group desire to hear the pro-PC side as well, Stanley Fish of Duke University is available to argue against Mr. D'Souza. A special package deal for the two costs $8,000. It appears that unfettered intellectual debate isn't dead after all. It's just way overpriced. •

HAVANA POSTCARD

ESPRESSO TO GO

By Anna Husarska

"Un cafecito?" I asked. "Sí, muchas gracias," the heavy from the Interior Ministry answered. I put the espresso machine on. A few minutes later, as Cuban television was broadcasting the opening session of the Fourth Communist Party Congress, I was having a cup of coffee with my interrogator. The coffee was Italian style—strong and small—and soon my guardian was ready to take me away. "Will you not catch *Comandante*? He is about to address the Congress," I ventured. He couldn't resist. "OK, but let's not make it too long."

As we were waiting for Fidel Castro to start speaking, I asked my guardian if he expected any changes at the Congress. "You cannot have it done in a month or a

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year," he said. "*We* did it in Poland in one year," I answered. "But how do you avoid having all those *traficantes* [black marketeers]?" he asked. "You simply change the law and they become businessmen," I answered. "And if you introduce freedom of the press, then instead of driving me to the airport to make sure I leave the country, you would be driving there to pick me up and make sure I arrive safely in town."

By the time I had explained to him the basic principles of a free society and market economy, the live broadcast of the Party Congress was interrupted and a cartoon was being shown. My minder clearly wanted to hear more about how neocapitalist Poland was controlling inflation, but since the *Comandante*'s speech was postponed till the afternoon, he was getting anxious to leave. There was still enough time to make the Miami flight on which I was to be expelled. "One for the road?" I proposed to gain time. "No, I cannot. Nothing with alcohol." "I understand. You're on duty," I replied. "No. High blood pressure," he said. He started talking about his medical condition, but then remembered why he was there.

Downstairs the other uniformed man from the Interior Ministry was sitting in the police car going through the Communist Party organ *Granma*, which had printed the names of all 1,800 delegates to the Party Congress—they took up five full pages. The driver barked into the squeaking radio, "We are going where you said, sir." Then I realized we were returning to the Interior Ministry, where they had vaguely interrogated me two hours earlier.

In the back seat, I moved my toothbrush from bag to pocket. Once in the ministry's waiting-cum-interrogation room I was asked again what my purpose was in coming to Cuba. I said I was visiting friends. My interrogator left, understandably unconvinced by my answer, and I started wondering what I would do with the addresses of people I had met or was going to meet. I finally decided that I had coded them sufficiently to be safe. But my worries were unfounded. No more questions were asked and soon my guardian reappeared, to escort me to the airport.

Three days earlier, on the morning I arrived for what was meant to be a ten-day visit, I went to the house of Elizárdo Sánchez Santa Cruz, the 47-year-old head of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN). Forty journalists were there, listening to the text of the appeal that the newly formed Concertación Democrática Cubana (Cuban Democratic Convergence) has addressed to the delegates of the Party Congress. Over the next three days I was stunned by the openness of dissident activity. I met people from more than a dozen groups, all ready to give their names and sign their appeals and press releases. I felt totally ridiculous with my coding and other precautions.

Elizárdo, who spent eight-and-a-half of the last ten years in jail, is the most outspoken dissident and was one of those responsible for uniting different opposition groups under the one Convergence. He used to teach Marxist philosophy at the University of Havana and insists that the repression against leftist groups is stronger than against any other. His house in the La Playa section of Havana is an informal press center, the dining room decorated with a huge blue banner of the CCDHRN.

Sixty-four-year-old Gustavo Arcos Bergnes is one of the oldest dissidents still in Cuba. He took part with Fidel Castro in the failed attack on Moncada barracks in July 1953. He is now secretary general of the Human Rights Committee, which, like Elizárdo's group, monitors human rights violations nationwide. Gustavo is also thinking of taking some form of civic society action. The national coordinator of the Human Rights Party, Rolando Pajes, told me about his party's efforts in distributing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and about workshops that the culture section organizes in different poor quarters of Havana where dissident Soviet and Eastern European literature is discussed in an effort to educate the population.

The founder of Movimiento Harmonía (MAR), Yndamiro Restano, gave me a copy of his group's address to the delegates at the Party Congress and spoke of some recent shows of solidarity, including a massive attendance at a mass with everybody wearing blue, the color of the MAR. Magnolia de Armas, once a radio editor, described how her independent Journalists' Union is defending journalists like herself who have been fired for political reasons. Luis Octavio Ibarra, a young lawyer from the Cuban Integration Movement, showed me a graphic scheme he prepared that illustrated a possible coalition of all dissident movements around the goal of democratization.

A famous Cuban writer, José Lorenzo Fuentes, told me that although he fought in the revolution, once even by the side of Ernesto Che Guevara, now he thought that the ideas of the revolution were betrayed. A few months ago he signed a Declaration of Cuban Intellectuals, the first political act of his life. He said he wanted to lend his name to this cause because he agreed with the appeal for free elections, the lifting of travel restrictions, the reintroduction of free agricultural markets, and amnesty for political prisoners. He himself was imprisoned from 1969 to 1972 for having befriended a diplomat later accused of being a CIA spy. José Lorenzo expected repressive measures, knowing that two co-signatories have been expelled from the Writers' Union. He has two novels under way and I'm sure that they will never be published. "Not until *this* changes, for sure."

The newest of the independent groups I came across was the doctors' union, founded by Rosendo de Albán Tamayo, a 45-year-old surgeon who lost his job four months ago and thus didn't even have his monthly salary of 400 pesos ($20) from Calixto García Hospital. Earlier this year he tried to leave the country with another doctor and a truck driver on a makeshift raft, but they were caught on the Cuban coast. Now he has a

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one-year jail sentence pending an appeal, is without work, yet has to support his wife and three children. The other doctor who tried to escape did not join him in the independent union. "He is afraid, you see." "Aren't you afraid?" "Yes, I am, but less than he is."

The founder of the first free Cuban Trade Union (UGTC), Rafael Gutierrez Santos, is obviously not afraid to voice his disapproval of the system. He has been active since 1967 in the official trade union but decided to start an independent one. An electrician and crane operator in the port, he was eager to hear about the career of the shipyard electrician now presiding over Poland. Rafael had a fairly good knowledge of the history of Solidarity, and when I offered him a T-shirt with the famous red logo he was very moved. In exchange he gave me his 1980 rationing booklet, which all Cubans have in order to do their shopping. If I were to point to a single moment that could have made the Interior Ministry mad at me, I would say it was this exchange of symbolic gifts.

I had other gifts I wanted to give to Luis Alberto Pita Santos of the Association for the Defense of Political Rights (ADEPO), whom I met last year and who was very interested in how Poland managed to shake off communism. Unfortunately he and nine other dissidents were arrested on the eve of my expulsion. Sanchez suggested that this new wave of arrests was because ADEPO had called for a peaceful march in the center of Havana on October 25. ADEPO had warned that if Tiananmen or Timisoara were to be repeated, they would ask for the intervention of U.N. forces. Clearly this was more than Fidel could stomach.

The next day, as I was standing by my guardian angel with high blood pressure on the landing strip of the Havana airport, I asked him for the reason of my expulsion. He said he didn't know. I wish I could have believed him.

ANNA HUSARSKA is a Polish journalist who writes frequently for TNR.

The great state budget hoax.

BLAME GAME

By Andrew Bates

Judging from current news reports, state governments are reeling under the weight of long-term federal economic harassment and neglect. The federal government, moaned *The New York Times* a few months ago, "has shifted a heavy financial burden to the states and cities, cutting or eliminating federal grants for housing, education, mass transportation, and public works projects." What's more, these fed-bashers say, state governments alone have confronted the courageous budget decisions that Congress and the White House have been putting off for years. That's a "real example for the feds," gushed a recent editorial, this time in *The Washington Post.*

Sorry, but state budget reality isn't quite so rosy. The states facing the worst crises this year—California, Connecticut, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New York—bear most of the responsibility for their own fiscal undoing. And far from being paragons of political courage, most of the recent state budget resolutions suggest no more backbone than those of the federal government. The states too are chronically unable to say no to powerful special-interest groups—in this case, to the public employee unions.

It's true, of course, that throughout the 1980s Congress shifted responsibility for administering and funding a variety of health, welfare, education, and environmental chores to the states. And federal aid to states and localities did dry up briefly during the early to mid-1980s. But during this period the states enjoyed 8 percent to 10 percent annual revenue growth, thanks to a booming economy. And since 1987 federal aid has risen over 20 percent in real terms and is slated to rise 3.5 percent for fiscal 1992. The point is that not all states now have budget crises, and those in the worst shape are those whose fiscal policies left them particularly vulnerable to the recession. Instead of building up their reserves during the 1980s, they went on a spending spree. Take Massachusetts. By law states are obligated by the feds to provide only ten of forty-two Medicare services; Massachusetts reimburses patients for all the remaining thirty-two.

But nowhere has state profligacy been more obvious than in the growth of state employment. State bureaucracies mushroomed in the 1980s: while the U.S. population grew by 9 percent, public-sector employment at the state level rose by about 19 percent. In New York the number of state employees swelled by 30 percent from 1980 to 1989; the state's population grew by just 2 percent. State employment rose ten times as fast as the population in Massachusetts, six times as fast in Connecticut, and five times as fast in New Jersey.

The civil service unions took full advantage of this trend. As a result, although unions are on the defensive in the private-sector, with membership declining, the public-sector unions have never had it so good, with nearly 1.2 million new members added during the past decade (a growth of 30 percent). With this kind of political clout, the unions were able to drive hard bargains with governors. From 1980 to 1987 salaries in the private sector increased 35 percent; state worker salaries rose 59 percent. Employee and retiree health insurance quietly became the fastest-growing category of state spending, outpacing even Medicaid. All in all,

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most states locked themselves into pay scales they're now finding unaffordable.

But despite a lot of talk earlier this year about reducing government spending and "making tough choices," most governors proved reluctant to take on the civil service unions, viewing the task as both quixotic and politically suicidal. So though the states approved nearly $20 billion in new taxes, with California leading the way at $7 billion, they barely touched spending: only Massachusetts has actually reduced its budgetary outlays. Fewer than 25,000 state employees out of 3.5 million nationwide have been laid off so far this year. On the whole, state employment is likely to increase, as it does every year. One state budget analyst puts it bluntly: "I don't see state legislators or governors wanting to pick fights with these [civil service] unions."

Those who have tried haven't had much luck. Faced with a $14.3 billion budget deficit, California Governor Pete Wilson is still trying to win any concessions he can from the state's most powerful unions. Earlier this year he had called for laying off up to 10,000 state employees to cut costs, but administration officials say that figure is now down to 3,000. In fact, no layoffs have occurred yet, as Wilson and the unions are still bitterly negotiating a 5 percent pay cut. California labor leaders say they won't pay for the state's fiscal mismanagement, and it's clear that they haven't been: during the past fiscal year, when thousands of jobs were lost in construction, manufacturing, and retail sales, the ranks of state and local government employees grew by nearly 50,000.

Meanwhile, Wilson has somehow won national acclaim for a budget resolution that includes $7 billion in new taxes—the largest tax increase in any state's history—yet virtually no spending cuts. In fact, state spending in California is going to increase by 8 percent this year. Far from holding the line on spending, as he claimed he would, Wilson received legislative approval for what amounts to a $58 billion budget, 15 percent higher than last year's. So while virtually every major East Coast op-ed page has favorably discussed Wilson's chances for the White House in 1996, his own constituents may not even return him to the statehouse: his approval ratings are under 30 percent and still in free-fall. He is fast becoming the Republican version of New Jersey Governor Jim Florio, who faced a voter revolt in 1990 when he approved a $2.8 billion tax increase.

This year Florio called for a reduction in the state work force of up to 8,000, half through layoffs, the rest through early retirement and attrition. But by the time New Jersey's budget was approved on June 30, Florio and the state legislature, under pressure from the unions, had reduced the number to 2,300. So far only 1,200 employees have been laid off. Meanwhile, despite an $812 million budget deficit, New Jersey's budget will rise 18.5 percent to $14.7 billion.

Shortly after taking office in January, Connecticut Governor Lowell Weicker announced a small number of layoffs, which represented the first time any state employee had been laid off in the past sixteen years, and warned that an additional 3,500 employees could soon receive pink slips. (One member of the Commission to Study the Management of State Government estimated that as many as 10,000 of the state's employees could be laid off "and no one would know the difference.") In April the state issued layoff notices to 2,600 employees in an effort to cut costs. Two weeks later Weicker rescinded the order after getting the unions to ratify an agreement on wage and benefits concessions, such as the deferral of a pay increase, worth roughly $350 million. That agreement, however, became void when the legislature failed to adopt a budget by July 1, the start of the new fiscal year. Acting as if they alone should be immune from the effects of the state's fiscal crisis, the unions wouldn't give back the pay hikes and are refusing to go along with a similar wage concession agreement. Only now is Weicker calling their bluff by issuing pink slips to roughly 3,750 employees.

Why have governors of such diverse ideological stripes as Wilson, Florio, and Weicker found themselves so badly hamstrung by the civil service unions? On top of the unions' political clout, archaic civil service rules and procedures make it almost impossible for any governor committed to reducing the public-sector work force to deliver on his promises. Take "bumping," in which a senior employee who is laid off can "bump" someone less senior from his job, triggering a chain reaction down the line. It's every state manager's worst nightmare and a guaranteed way to increase political discontent. In May, when Florio tried to lay off 1,000 workers, 20,000 were required to receive notices that their jobs might be affected. And the civil service unions have tremendous leverage: when highly skilled personnel, such as teachers or health care workers, strike, there's no easily marshaled "reserve army" of skilled private-sector workers ready to take their place.

Only Governor Lawton Chiles of Florida seems to have the gumption to slash burgeoning public-sector payrolls and encourage state managers to cut dead weight. He has designed a plan, approved by the legislature, to end his state's archaic job classification system and make it easier for state managers to promote productive employees and fire lazy ones. Meanwhile, many states prefer to solve the squeeze by shifting responsibilities to the even more fiscally strapped counties and localities—and attaching more mandates as well. In an effort to obscure the level of spending increases in his California budget, for example, Wilson smoothly shifted $2.2 billion in social and health services down to local governments. Now there's a lesson learned from the feds. •

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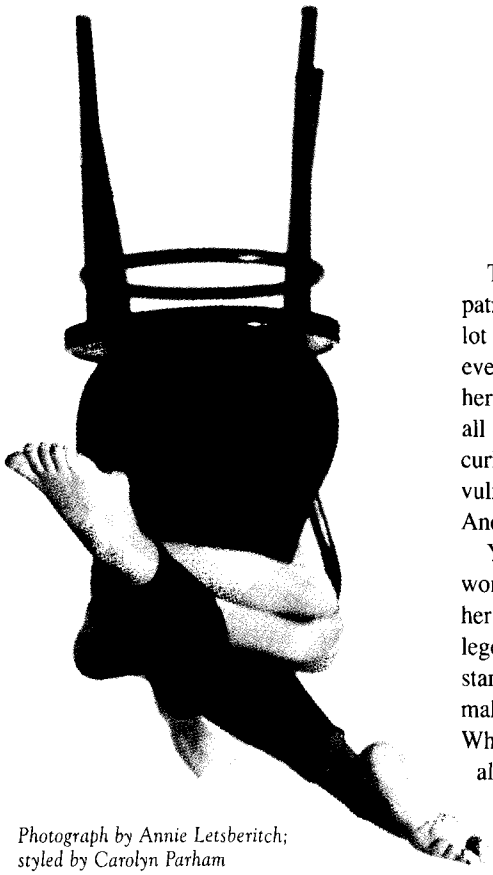
"I'm scared of how desirable I am sometimes."



Photograph by Annie Letsberitch; styled by Carolyn Parham

"I never thought I was all that special." Curled up on a banquette at the new Cafe Dessert Storm, the Profile Subject is, typically, selling herself short. Good luck. At 5'10", amber waves of post-Raphaelite hair framing a set of hairpin curves, her deck is clearly stacked. But don't kid yourself—the Subject can make waves with her brain, too. A Simone Weil in spandex, she's the quintessence, as Rilke pretty much said, of all the buzz collecting around a new name.

She's flamboyantly herself; she knows she can just load her kids in a shopping cart and zip through Harry Winston's, picking stuff by hand, her bustier barely containing her Dickensian figure. Not that she trades on it. Or aspires to. "I'm scared of how desirable I am sometimes," she concedes ruefully. It's that brutal honesty that led Joan Didion to write.

The great-great-granddaughter of early patrician looters, her ancestors go back a lot further than most people realize. Not even her sense of privacy is as palpable as her flawless porcelain gene pool. Or is it all a mask to conceal her formidable insecurity? "Deep down, she's just a very, very vulnerable little girl," says one Milanese. And America loves that.

Yet a few years ago, she didn't know the word "plethora"; now you can't get it off her lips. Perhaps that's what's behind the legendary intensity of her burnt umber stare—her ability to rip your face off, make you care, ask what she's looking at. Which many on both coasts interpret as aloofness. Or astigmatism. "That's wrong," says Mrs. W.E.B. de Trop. "It seems funny to say this, but anything about her that translates as remotely unattractive is actually not."

The rumored suitor? No less remarkable, a global powerhouse in fiber-optic toilets, he's also a collector of museum quality, very much his own protagonist, fiercely mental and able to penetrate with troubling speed. He obviously adores her. Who doesn't?

Once inside her venerable triplex, it's easy to see why. The rooms are a quirky mélange of old-world gallantry and in-your-face humanism. The children are away being vaccinated by Jonas Salk. Whereas most subscribers give their kids polio for breakfast and think nothing of it. The thought of them makes her pensive, and she stretches those reckless cheekbones across the daybed. Suddenly she smiles. Softly. In her hand a book, given her by Havel.

She's read it, too. "She knows who Silas Marner *is*," says one brahmin who appears not to. She invokes Hegel just as easily, if inappropriately. Which may be why she has opinions on everything besides the *intifada*: "I can't help feeling the world is on this terrible roller coaster, where nobody can really get it up since the atom bomb." Hard words. But she lives by them. Not every actress would have taken the role of the character unabashedly pushing 20. But then, she's never been content to rely on dogma.

Nor is she ever available between 3 and 4, no matter what. That's because of her extraordinary nineteenth-century sense of time. That's why she never wears a lick of facial hair, even for close-ups. Might that be what's behind her relationship with Lazard Frères? "I can't say," says Frères. "All I can tell you is that it's very, very complicated, it's not about money, and she's always been there for us. How many clients bake you banana bread when the bottom line drops out?"

It is dusk now. Evening lights are coming on; in its bedroom, the pathetic readership is creasing open its magazine. There, surrounded by four greyhound-slim greyhounds, Everysubject looks like what she is—neither numbed nor hardened by the future, just marvelously angular and unafraid. But don't *(Continued on page 793)*

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Eurocrats dig the regulation scene.

JAM SESSIONS

By David Brooks

There are no monuments to the European Community bureaucrats who spent twenty years negotiating common regulatory standards for jam. No one threw ticker-tape parades for these Eurocrats who sacrificed whatever remote chance they might have had to lead interesting lives so that Europe could be jam harmonized. There are, of course, some consolations: the $120,000 salaries, the exemptions from national taxes, the separate schools and camps for their kids, the job security, household and expatriation allowances, and minimal working hours. But even this can't really compensate for the lack of rewards on the job. Still, they slog on. Birds gotta sing, bees gotta buzz, Eurocrats gotta harmonize.

Negotiations for continent-wide regulatory standards began in 1958, with the goal of an economically unified Europe. The premise was that European countries are always going to try to put one over on each other, so it's better to play out national rivalries over negotiating tables in Brussels than on battlefields at Verdun. But by the early 1980s talks to create a truly common market, not still wracked by varying standards and tariffs, had stagnated. In a fresh start, the EC set itself the goal of finishing the regulatory haggling by 1992. It sounded like a good idea, and much progress has been made. But the harmonization addiction is a hard one to kick.

The EC's jam negotiations are a classic case. Back in 1959 the Dutch liked their jam smooth, the French liked theirs chunky, and the British liked marmalade. The Germans wanted loose preservative standards, the Italians wanted to bar preservatives. (As refrigeration improved, the preservative dispute eventually became obsolete.) When the negotiators discovered carrot jam, they had to redefine carrots as a fruit so it would be covered by the language. Though common standards were achieved in 1979, there were further negotiations culminating in a 1988 directive and, like most EC rules, some of the member states haven't yet gotten around to enacting the standards into law.

The jam sessions have become a symbol of the EC's antlike diligence when it comes to regulating the minutiae of everyday life. The Eurocrats, though intelligent and dedicated, are congenitally incapable of stepping back and clarifying issues. They bury themselves in technocratic pedantry, and after twenty years they emerge with a subtle and intricate document that declares carrots as fruit. The EC recently passed standards for imitation foodstuffs so that children wouldn't mistakenly eat them. This spring a member of the European Parliament asked an intelligent question: Was it really necessary to regulate five-foot-long inflatable bananas because of the fear that a child might confuse it for the real thing? As usual, the Europarliament quivered to no effect.

The jam talks weren't the only monster negotiations. It took fourteen years to achieve toy standards. The negotiations over noise emission levels for lawn mowers were notoriously complicated. Currently there is a set of negotiations that raises troubling questions about the German mind. Most farmers in Europe don't bother to castrate their boars before puberty. But in negotiations on the topic, Germany has been disturbingly vociferous in its demands that all boars for eating be castrated as babies (they taste better that way).

Germany often seems to be the troublemaker in these disputes. It is perhaps no accident that the country with the worst food on the Continent has the most stringent regulatory standards. The Germans closely guard the ingredients that can go into sausage, for example, and are trying to impose them on the rest of the community. This allows the British to throw one of their delicious fits of patriotic high dudgeon. The list of proud national institutions allegedly under threat from Brussels reads like an honor roll to British bloody-mindedness: mince meat, pork pies, kippers, black pudding, potato crisps, real ale, double-decker buses, and custard tarts.

The German-influenced EC sausage standards, which regulate everything from spices to the elasticity of the skin, bar the gristle, cheekmeat, sinew, and fat that go into Britain's sausage, the banger. The British tabloids promise blood, sweat, and tears in defense of their peculiar breakfast delicacy, and seem to enjoy the opportunity to use the words "Queen Elizabeth" and "banger" in the same sentence. When EC bureaucrats pointed out that European regulations would make sausages healthier and better, a *Daily Telegraph* headline was the appropriate response: "HANDS OFF OUR BANGERS, WE LIKE THEM LOUSY."

Beer is another product that the Germans strictly regulate. Rules going back centuries ban anything but the basics from German beer. The Germans were unable to impose these standards on the rest of the community, but they were able to retain the standards for their own domestic beers. The European Court of Justice ruled that Germany must allow imports, even, for example, if they included the odd ingredients the Belgians throw into their beers: strawberries, apples, wheat, anything that's not tied down. Thus the EC was unable to arrive at common beer standards. An interesting thing happened: nothing. German consumers stuck with their domestic brands. Belgian women continued to drink their pink raspberry beer. The continent was not plunged into war.

Around 1985, after twenty-six years of beating their heads against the wall, Eurocrats began to wonder why they were doing it. They decided to change the rules. Instead of haggling endlessly to arrive at single standards for each good, nations would simply agree to respect

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each other's standards, except when health and safety were concerned. This innovation has dramatically speeded the creation of a common market. Recently, for example, an EC newsletter reported that though the Eurocrats were unable to arrive at common standards for toilet paper holders, they had agreed to respect each other's standards.

But the EC's harmonization problems did not end in 1985, and nothing close to a real common market will exist by the end of 1992. There are three reasons for this. First, makework. If the EC achieved Single Market nirvana, there'd be nothing left for Europe's regulators to do. As it stands, Eurocrats continue to produce nearly 1 million pages of rules every year, but for each EC regulation, the national governments produce ten. Every time the nationals make a regulation, the EC has to harmonize it, and then the nationals review it, and so on like mirrors reflecting upon each other to infinity.

In addition, the Eurocrats still feel they must achieve common standards for health and environmental regulations. This is interpreted broadly. For example, the EC felt compelled to reach common standards for plastic spatulas and funnels used in food preparation. Animals also must be harmonized. My first month in Brussels I made the mistake of asking a European in what I thought was a joking manner whether Europe was yet poodle-harmonized. This elicited a long and earnest discussion of the problems holding up the poodle harmonization talks.

Second, member states are still hooked on protectionism, regardless of common market rhetoric. These days trade barriers are likely to be disguised as health or environmental regulations. Germany refused to allow the import of French eyewash, citing health concerns but really to protect German manufacturers. Last spring, in an alleged attempt to reduce solid waste, Germany announced that companies shipping goods in Germany must haul the used empty packages back to the factory for recycling. This imposes incredible costs on a manufacturer who has to carry empty boxes all the way back to Dublin or Madrid.

The final reason the Single Market has stumbled is that Europe's political leaders are much happier bitching at one another than reaching peaceful accords. A recent spat says it all. On October 6, during a summit in the Netherlands, German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher reportedly hijacked the Dutch motorcade. He jumped into the waiting Dutch limo and ordered the driver to take him from the summit sight to the press center. The poor Dutch minister and EC president Jacques Delors were forced to take a taxi. Furious, the Dutch are now spreading (unconfirmed) rumors about the time, during a previous Dutch summit, when Genscher got himself wedged into a tapered bathtub and nearly drowned before managing to get out. It may not be up to the level of the jam wars, of course, but the era of Euro-wrangling is hardly at an end.

DAVID BROOKS is an editorial writer for *The Wall Street Journal* based in Brussels.

Japan's sleazy new PM.

RAW AND FISHY

By Joanna Pitman

TOKYO

In case you didn't notice, the next Japanese prime minister is likely to be one Kiichi Miyazawa. He is a perky 72-year-old grandfather whose illustrious career as finance minister ended in opprobrium less than three years ago when his entanglement in the Recruit bribery scandal was exposed and he was forced to resign. After two years in self-imposed political hibernation, he has crept back to the center of Liberal Democratic Party power and now claims to be purified. He will be hoisted into office on October 27, after a ritual vote by LDP Diet members. Miyazawa's new job symbolizes the LDP's belief not only that it has been exonerated since the Recruit scandal, but that it can now gleefully return to the practice of money politics as usual.

Every two years the LDP's numerous factions choose a party president, a post that automatically carries the title of prime minister because the party controls the powerful lower house of the Diet. But Japan's prime ministers are seldom chosen for their leadership qualities, vision, statesmanship, or ethics. Instead, the byzantine nature of the LDP means that they are selected on the basis of interfactional horse trading, often carried out in the seclusion of exclusive Tokyo restaurants. For the past fortnight, party barons have been sequestered in comfortable culinary premises, chewing over miscellaneous offers of power and money, while the capital's most discreet geishas dole out slices of raw fish and refill sake cups.

Miyazawa is the leader of the party's third-biggest faction. When it was announced that the largest faction, lead by party kingmaker and former Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita, would support him on October 27, Miyazawa knew he had finally realized his lifetime dream. He owes his victory largely to the failure of the Takeshita faction to field its own candidate, after withdrawing its support from Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu.

Takeshita's own heir apparent, the 49-year-old Ichiro Ozawa, refused to run. He is biding his time in preparation for the leadership election scheduled for 1993. Finance Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, the popular, ambitious pin-up boy of Japanese politics, was to be the stand-by candidate, but he has had his immediate hopes of glory dashed by the almost $6 billion worth of financial scandals that have emerged on his watch this year. He resigned last week to take responsibility.

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Given that the No. 2 faction has recently split into miniature schisms of its own, Miyazawa might appear to have won entirely by accident. In fact, he spared little in his final bid to become prime minister. The influential *Mainichi Shimbun* reported that his faction, which began fund-raising for the leadership race only in August, has spent $7.8 million on the campaign. A junior faction member declared that he and his colleagues had spent a month wining and dining influential party members thought to have the ear of Takeshita. In time-honored political tradition, they distributed envelopes of cash to promote their cause further, he told the paper.

Miyazawa himself, who is said to have cried when he failed four years ago to become prime minister, has pursued his goal with naked cupidity. He has made regular pilgrimages to the feet of the kingmaker and paid tireless homage to hundreds of the Takeshita faction faithful. On one day during the final week, evidently spurred by the scent of victory, he reportedly made 157 visits to Diet members, bowing nose to knees before each one and making pleas for their patronage. A judicious distribution of the $7.8 million has clearly bolstered Miyazawa's case, but just as important will have been his promises of prime party posts to his Takeshita faction benefactors. Most sought-after are the finance, construction, and trade and industry portfolios, for these guarantee billions of yen in political donations from their wealthy constituents.

Anyone expecting serious consideration of policies in a Japanese leadership race will be disappointed, as policies are traditionally ignored in favor of criteria of a more pecuniary nature. This year, however, Miyazawa and his two rivals, Michio Watanabe and Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, felt obliged to throw together policy platforms, which they have been mouthing fastidiously along the campaign trail. Discretion, however, prevents me from naming the campaign chief who, when questioned on his faction leader's platform, had no idea until he sat down and read through the leaflet rushed out for the race.

A delicate, almost invisible line divides their ideas. All three have opted, conventionally, for strong relations with the United States, closer ties with Asia, and efforts to improve the environment. All have also paid lip service to the fashionable idea of political reform to clean up Japan's system of money politics. This despite the fact that it was their opposition that led in early October to the scrapping of political reform bills designed to do precisely what they now advocate.

"Money and the ability to get it is of paramount importance for a Japanese politician," says Takeshi Sasaki, professor of politics at Tokyo University. Few bother to disguise their venal approach to politics. Three years ago a former agriculture minister reportedly claimed expenses for $4,250 for taking his constituents to Tokyo Disneyland, and a former chief Cabinet secretary claimed $14,450 for leading wavering voters, in batches of 150, to the Tokyo Imperial Theater for cultural nights out.

The last general election in February 1990 cost the LDP close to $3 billion. Money was scattered along the campaign trail like confetti at a wedding. The going rate for a rural vote is said to be the cost of a CD player, and in some constituencies during the run-up to an election, the locals are fed with special *o-nigiri*—rice balls filled with fish and vegetables and wrapped up in seaweed and a 10,000 yen ($78) note.

The choice of Miyazawa as the next prime minister indicates that the gerontocracy of the LDP, which has presided over thirty-six uninterrupted years in government, is back. Thanks to the good services of Kaifu, a largely puppet prime minister and symbolic Mr. Clean, the party has come full circle to pre-Recruit-style party politics. Viewed by the public as an amiable worthy who, despite his Takeshita faction bosses, was willing to introduce political reform bills, Kaifu won huge public sympathy and pushed LDP support ratings up to a record high of more than 60 percent. Now the party bosses can get on with their jobs, having shoved the political reform package down to the bottom of their agenda.

In most nations claiming to be democracies, opposition parties would have walked all over a government exhibiting such blatant evidence of corruption. In Japan, however, the opposition parties are disastrously hobbled by their dependence on the LDP for financial support. It is an open secret in Nagatacho, Japan's equivalent of Capitol Hill, that the LDP regularly funnels a portion of its own funds to the opposition to give the impression of a fair contest. "Over 90 percent of bills introduced to the Diet are passed within six months, due to the LDP paying off the opposition," says Jesper Koll, a former aide to an LDP politician.

The public, jaded by a seemingly endless stream of scandals and tearful resignations, couldn't care less. Most are resigned to permanent LDP government, for the party and the bureaucrats have ensured that there is virtually no forum for effective complaint. Fed by a national press that has a fine tradition of lampooning the politicians as corrupt, second-rate opportunists, the public sees little untoward in having a scandal-tainted former minister selected as their next prime minister.

Wisely, few have vested either hopes or fears in the coming Miyazawa administration. "Miyazawa will be forced to toe the line with the Takeshita faction. Very little will change," says Yoichi Kato, political commentator for the *Asahi Shimbun*. If, once he occupies the throne at the end of the month, Miyazawa's debt to the kingmaker ever slips his mind, he will likely be badgered and bullied until he resumes his agreed role as the Takeshita mouthpiece. And the front man for a system that makes Capitol Hill look like a fountainhead of virtue.

JOANNA PITMAN is the Tokyo correspondent for *The Times* of London.

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The White House panics.

THE SLUMP THING

By Fred Barnes

Jack Kemp, the secretary of housing and urban development, fidgeted, grimaced, and fumed. For the first time in months the Cabinet-level Economic Policy Council was meeting. President Bush, who routinely skips EPC proceedings, made an appearance. Even more unusual, Kemp, the loudest internal critic of Bush's economic policies, had been invited. He didn't like what he heard.

The September 25 session opened with a briefing by Michael Boskin, Bush's chief economist. He was a bundle of good news. He cited gains in manufacturing, plant capacity, retail sales, initial public offerings. What provoked Kemp was a chart on the misery index, the sum of the inflation and jobless rates. The chart showed a graph with three bars, a tall one for the Carter years, a shorter one for the Reagan era, and a still shorter one for Bush's term. Kemp couldn't contain himself.

"This is ridiculous," he said. "How can you explain to the American people that the misery index is a manifestation of good news?" High inflation and a recession in Reagan's first two years skewed the numbers, Kemp said. The misery index in later Reagan years was lower than on Bush's watch. There's plainly more economic misery now, he insisted. The Kemp broadside prompted recriminations. Bush was silent, but John Sununu, the White House chief of staff, criticized Kemp. Boskin backed Sununu. Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher took Kemp's side. "The meeting degenerated," a White House official says. "It was embarrassing."

The Bush administration has lost its cohesion and its assertiveness. Bush is often testy and anxious, opening White House meetings with angry outbursts. Faced with domestic problems, he is reactive and unsure. The control he's displayed in crisis after crisis overseas is absent. He was paralyzed for days after his Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas, was accused of sexual harassment, afraid to join the battle to save him. Bush's nominee to head the CIA, Robert Gates, may be confirmed, but just barely. And the president's unblemished record of sustained vetoes (11 of 11) is in jeopardy. The losing issue: his bid to block abortion counseling at federally funded family planning clinics. Bush's popularity is sinking too, from a peak of 89 percent in the Gallup Poll after Desert Storm last March to 65 percent in October. True, 65 percent is impressively high for a president in his third year. But further erosion is expected, given the sclerotic economy and stepped-up Democratic attacks.

The economy, never robust in the Bush era, is barely recovering from a yearlong recession. There hasn't been a single quarter of 2 percent growth or more since Bush got to the White House. He and his aides are understandably worried that the economy will be stagnant, or worse, as he runs for re-election next year, handing Democrats a powerful theme. So Bush is eager to spur economic growth. The trouble is, his advisers are bitterly divided on how to achieve this. And Bush isn't confident enough on economic issues to resolve the matter.

There's more. Bush bristles at the notion that he's a "foreign policy president" who ignores domestic problems. But the idea has stuck for good reason. Check his itinerary this year. He went to Mexico. He swung through France, Britain, Greece, and Turkey. There was the Moscow summit. He visited Czechoslovakia, Germany, and France on one foray, Canada, Martinique, and Bermuda on another. And he's not finished. In November he'll travel to Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Australia. He'll also drop by meetings in Italy and the Netherlands. And if a Mideast peace conference begins this fall—Geneva is the likely location—he wouldn't miss it.

Nevertheless Bush has grown defensive about his preference for foreign policy. At his October 4 press conference, he offered an alibi (no one asked for one). His excuse was that reporters pepper him with questions about foreign policy and that "there's a disproportionate responsibility on the president," compared with Congress, for national security. "I just hope it doesn't come out that this is all I'm interested in, because it isn't," Bush said. The problem, he explained, is that when he broaches domestic issues, people say he's just being political. He promised to "keep plodding along here and making clear what our domestic priorities are."

OK, what are they? Bush hasn't made up his mind. On the economy he's torn between arguing everything is fine and everything isn't. In his opening statement at the press conference, he argued both. "The drop in unemployment [from 6.8 percent to 6.7 percent] is one more sign that the economy is strengthening," he said.

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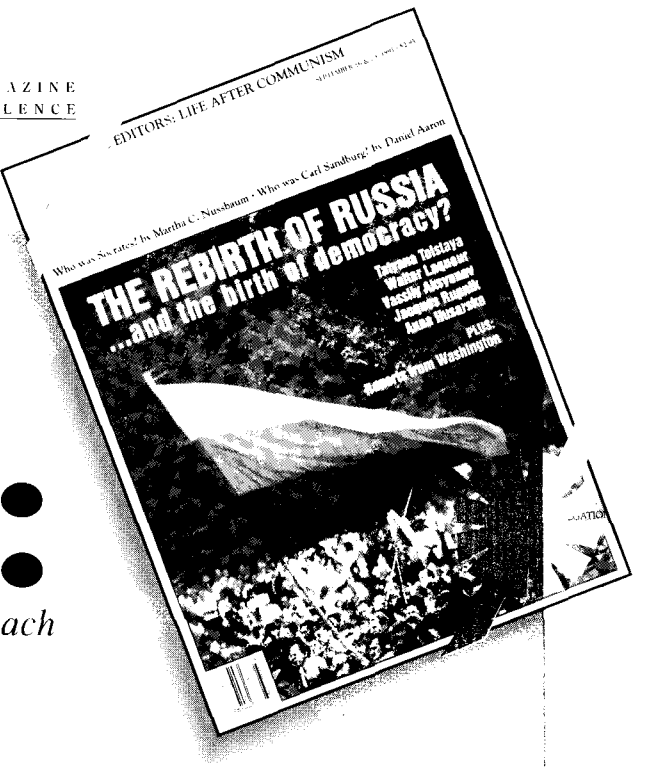

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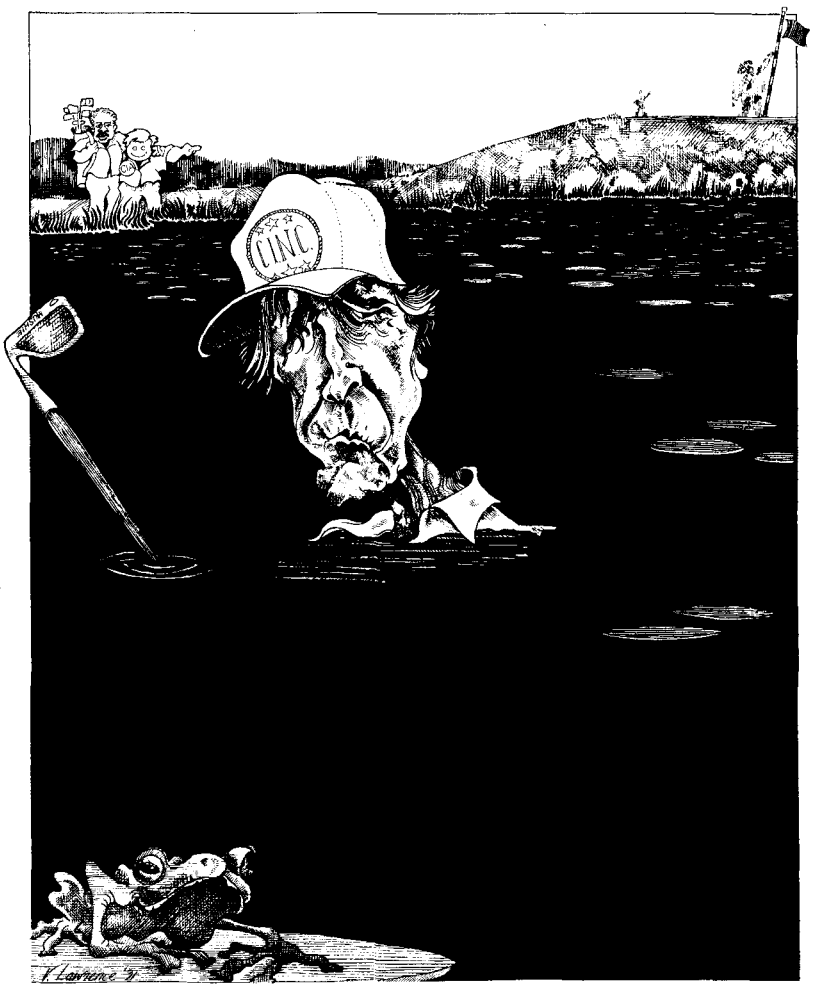
"New car sales were up, housing sales were up, purchasing managers index was bullish on the manufacturing sector.... Interest rates are falling to levels that we haven't seen since 1977." Then he added: "Let me be the first to say all is not well."

"Traditional supporters of the president whom he meets with regularly are having trouble getting loans," says a Cabinet member and longtime Bush ally. "A lot of them are developers. Their loans are being called or they can't make payments." Bush's contact with these troubled souls has increased recently, an official said, as his re-election plans take shape. Several are major campaign fund-raisers for Bush. The president also got an earful at the White House state dinner for King Hassan II of Morocco on September 26. A businessman sat at Bush's table and fed him tales of the credit crunch. He told Bush that banking examiners were cracking down so hard that banks are afraid to make any loans at all. As the businessman talked, Bush became more alarmed and angry. "He's tired of having friends say, 'I can't get credit,'" says the Cabinet member. The next morning, Bush was late in arriving at an EPC meeting, the follow-up to the one that had deteriorated into bickering. He was phoning Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to tell him about his new proposal for cutting nuclear arms. Yet when Bush got to the meeting, he was still furious about what he'd heard over dinner the night before. "He was really steamed," an aide says.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Bush read the riot act. He said the credit crunch is real. He complained about overregulation. (He didn't mention he'd sponsored the two biggest causes of new regulation, Clean Air Act revisions and the Americans with Disabilities Act.) He said aides had assured him the credit problem was solved. "It's not solved," he asserted. "There's nothing coming from us about what we're going to do.... We talk about it, but nothing happens."

The president's tirade was followed by reports on the economy from Boskin, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, and Treasury Secretary Nick Brady, none of which satisfied him. "There was a lot of blaming of 28-year-old banking examiners," says a participant in the session, which touched a chord with Bush. "Who do these guys work for, anyway?" he asked. Brady looked pained. Banking examiners work for the comptroller of the currency, a Treasury official and Brady subordinate. Brady is Bush's closest friend in the Cabinet and they socialize regularly, which makes criticism all the more significant. "I've never seen the president as directly criticize a Cabinet secretary," says a senior White House official.

Bush ordered up measures for easing the credit crunch. When the EPC convened again on October 8, Deputy Treasury Secretary John Robson outlined them, mostly old ideas freshly packaged. But they also included schemes for allowing bankers to thwart federal examiners and for raising more capital. Promulgating the measures culminated Bush's effort to combat the credit crunch. "We've now done about all we can do in the credit area," a Bush adviser says.

The Kemp faction was not satisfied. "Don't expect this in and of itself to lift the economy," Kemp warned Bush. "The problem goes deeper than a credit crunch. It's a capital formation crunch." Mosbacher echoed Kemp. Labor Secretary Lynn Martin worried about how the announcement of new credit measures would look. They should be presented "in the context of what it means for consumers and jobs and the economy, not bankers," she said.

Bush bought that. Kemp asked for more, urging the president to use the credit announcement to tout a growth package, including a cut in the capital gains tax rate. Brady bridled. "Mr. President, this is for the credit crunch," he interjected. "It shouldn't be a part of this. Don't mix apples and oranges." Bush split the difference. He referred vaguely to "our agenda for job creation and growth," adding that he'll "review additional recommendations in the weeks ahead." He didn't mention capital gains.

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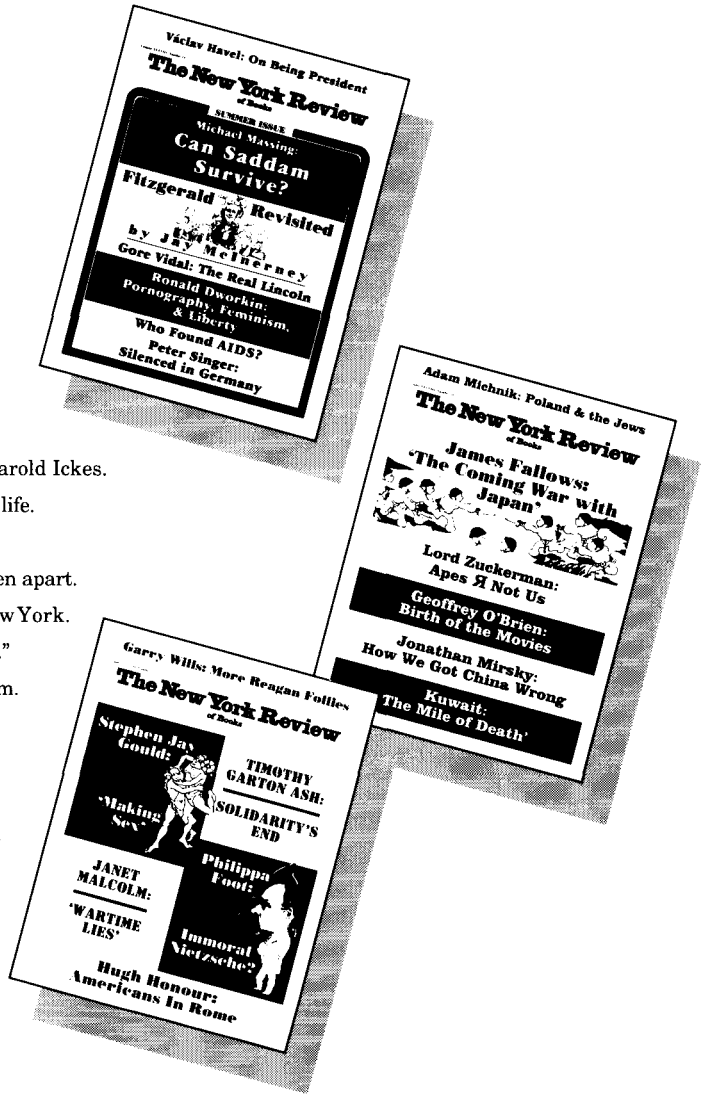

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Bush is in a quandary over what to do next. He's agonizingly indecisive in resolving his dilemma, if only because his advisers are hopelessly split. It's not that he's afraid to talk up a capital gains cut. He does that every week in tedious speeches around the country that the press rightly ignores. In Miami on September 30, Bush described a capital gains cut as a boost to "start-up companies and other small businesses.... It offers a helping hand to entrepreneurs and dreamers.... [It] will help beleaguered industry, especially the real estate business." Bush's quandary is whether to press Congress aggressively to pass a cut—in other words, do so in a way that attracts public attention.

Brady, Sununu, and budget director Richard Darman say he shouldn't. They like the current lip service approach. Brady fears what one Cabinet member calls "fairness fallout." Identification with a tax cut Democrats say disproportionately aids the wealthy will leave Bush politically vulnerable. Attacks that Bush would rather help the rich than the middle class will resonate. Besides, Brady is convinced that Democrats in Congress have the votes to block passage. Bush would get the worst of both worlds, political blame and no boost to the economy from enactment of a capital gains cut.

There *is* a way to get the cut, only Sununu and Darman are apoplectic at the thought of it. Kemp proposed at the EPC meeting on October 8 that Bush woo dissident Democrats who might opt for "a pro-safety net and pro-growth package." This would mean breaking the budget deal that Sununu and Darman negotiated a year ago. Sununu trashed the Kemp proposal. He persuaded Bush and most Cabinet members that the budget agreement is the chief bulwark against a new burst of domestic spending by Democrats. If the deal is breached, says a Cabinet member, "Democrats will drive a tank through it."

Maybe so, but at least Bush would have a credible claim to a domestic program. As it stands, he doesn't. He'll probably unveil the framework of a health care initiative in his State of the Union address next January, but that may not be enough. "Bush is extremely sensitive to the charge that he has no domestic agenda," says an administration official. How do we know this? He raises the subject obsessively and bellyaches about the accusation. What he hasn't done is actually fight to enact a domestic program.

Bush would rather schmooze than fight. His strategy is to get what he can by compromising with Democratic leaders in Congress and forget the rest. Ideological confrontation was Reagan's game, not Bush's. He prefers bipartisanship, offset by a few low-key veto fights. (This leaves him lots of time to dabble in foreign policy.) Since there's little Bush really wants enacted anyway, the strategy served him well—until the Thomas confirmation struggle.

The White House assumed that Thomas, a black conservative, would be confirmed unless he screwed up royally. Handlers coached Thomas to play up his autobiography and play down his ideology. Thomas followed orders all too well. He distanced himself from the conservatism of his speeches and interviews as a Reagan administration official. He repudiated an article on natural law in *The American Spectator* that he'd once praised lavishly. He made the amazing statement that, unlike nearly every American who can read and write, he'd never discussed the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision that legalized abortion. Thomas said what he thought Democrats wanted to hear.

It didn't work. Thomas came off as deceptive and unconvincing. Most Democrats opposed him. Worse, it disillusioned his conservative supporters. When the sexual harassment charge arose on October 6, liberal foes of Thomas had the field to themselves. They forced the Senate Judiciary Committee to reopen hearings. Bush pounded the table during a private meeting with congressional Republicans to show his anger over the Senate's treatment of Thomas. But his public support was not as noisy. He refused to go beyond a bland expression of backing for Thomas.

Marlin Fitzwater, the White House press secretary, used the word "smear" to characterize the sexual harassment charge against Thomas. Bush steered clear of that language. "It would be counterproductive for me or the White House generally to get involved in the process.... So don't bother asking any more questions." Counterproductive to fight for his own nominee and friend? Fitzwater went ballistic when a reporter badgered Bush to endorse Fitzwater's smear characterization or repudiate it. He stormed into the midst of a Bush photo opportunity on October 10 and insisted he'd never used the word. (He had.) "Do not try to come in here with false accusations," he said. Later Fitzwater apologized to the reporter, John Cochran of NBC.

Then Thomas made a smart move. He fired his White House-appointed handlers and adopted a strategy of confrontation. He drafted a statement to the committee on his own. White House aides were skeptical. But when Thomas overpowered the committee with his testimony, Bush was emboldened to tell reporters at a photo opportunity, "This decent and honorable man has been smeared." Bush declined, however, to blame Thomas's accuser, Anita Hill, directly. Asked on October 13 if Hill was lying, Bush said, "I have total confidence in Judge Thomas." Over Thomas's weekend of travail, Bush hibernated at Camp David. Back at the White House on October 14, he stressed polls showing support for Thomas.

The Thomas episode fits the Bush pattern on domestic policy. When the strategy of accommodation fails, Bush doesn't know what to do. He's frozen in indecision. When Kemp erupted over Boskin's misery index chart, Sununu countered him. He called Kemp a capital gains fanatic and said, "I'm mad at you." Sununu argued for his alternative to a capital gains tax cut: tax write-offs of up to $50,000 for investments in small companies. "Mr. President," Kemp responded, looking at Bush, "your chief of staff is mad at me for supporting your capital gains tax cut." Bush had an opportunity to decide the issue on the spot. He didn't seize it. •

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THE DRIFTER

By Sidney Blumenthal

For the Republicans, politics has become total war. As the hours of Anita Hill's testimony grew, the reaction in the White House was the sort of response that is less deliberative than instinctive; it was to mount a furious negative campaign. The soft-spoken law professor from Oklahoma had unpredictably loomed up as one of the more formidable enemies confronted by the Bush administration—perhaps even as threatening in her potential ability to inflict damage as the machete-waving Noriega or the pistol-flaunting Saddam. But the issues of the clash—of veracity and character—which could be resolved only by leaps of faith on all sides, obscured the president's larger predicament. The confirmation of Clarence Thomas could not resolve it, and might even contribute to the complication. The war with Anita Hill was not a war Bush needed.

The pillars of Bush's presidency, which have supported him in a royal position until this point, are beginning to soften and crumble. Neither the economy nor social issues nor even foreign policy will carry a president who chooses to strike a statuelike pose. Bush's edifice is becoming shaky for internal structural reasons, rather than from pressure applied from without by his largely hapless opponents. Patchwork and plastering will not hold his presidency together for long; the cracks have reached into the foundation.

The Thomas confirmation struggle has exposed only one of the rapidly widening fissures: by making good on his promise to the Republican right on social issues, of which Clarence Thomas is a token in more ways than one, Bush has lit a short fuse. The real problem Bush faced with Thomas was not that he would be brought down, but that he would be confirmed and act on the convictions he had pretended not to have.

Bush has long been eager to cultivate the cultural conservatives. As vice president in November 1985, he had an hour-long meeting with Jim Bakker, the spiritual leader of the PTL Club. Bush said that he watched Bakker's television show occasionally and wouldn't mind giving him money. Shortly afterward, Barbara Bush had Tammy Faye to lunch—undoubtedly one of the strangest encounters in recent American history for which, alas, there is no transcript. Following tea, three of Bush's political operatives, preparing for his presidential campaign, were put on large retainers by the evangelist.

Bush had developed a reflexive flinch on his right side. He had learned that his greatest liability was who he really was. Not only had Reagan impressed this lesson upon him in the 1980 primaries by harping on his privileged background, but his son George Jr. had lost a congressional race in Texas by being smeared as an Eastern elitist. The sins of the father had been visited on the children. Once he was named Reagan's running mate, Bush was determined to quell the criticism. He immediately altered his position on abortion to fit that of Reagan (who had shifted his pro-choice position some years earlier).

The Reagan coalition was built in part on social issues. In particular the abortion issue came to symbolize the restoration of traditional values. But during the Reagan administration the social issues agenda was systematically blocked by none other than the Reagan administration. Reagan himself was carefully kept from ever appearing at the annual anti-abortion rally held in Lafayette Park across from the White House. Though he was only a few hundred yards away, he materialized only via telephone. The White House image masters, zealously protective, wanted no pictures. In combination with the Senate Republican leadership, the White House allowed the right-wing causes to be raised for propaganda purposes and then tabled. The idea was to keep the matter in an agitated state of suspension. Abortion and other issues were to be exploited, but never resolved. In effect, the social issues constituencies were lending their votes to the GOP, which used them to secure passage of its economic agenda.

Bush, who sees himself as the custodian of various legacies and who in his inaugural address proclaimed his mission as "stewardship," inherited this uneasy trust from Reagan. What Reagan had kept nicely simmering was coming to a boil. The retirement of aged liberals from the Supreme Court turned up the flame. In the eyes of the right, the Court has been one of the bastions of liberal evil for decades. *Roe* v. *Wade* had given the anti-abortion movement powerful momentum. Now, in the 1990s, the balance could be tipped the other way, as Republican presidents since Nixon had pledged. Nixon and Ford, however, had be-

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trayed the cause by naming moderates.

Bush wants to preserve the Reagan coalition without paying the consequences. He wants the benefits of intense polarization without offending anyone. He wants to emerge as the victor of this battle without a fight. His desire to have it all ways lies at the root of all the succeeding events. Initially, according to a reliable source, Bush had wanted to name Thomas even before David Souter but had to be restrained by his advisers, who informed him that Thomas lacked judicial experience, having just been named to the federal appeals court. Rebuffed, Bush settled on a mysterious nonentity, who had taken no positions on anything and firmly refused to answer any question on abortion. Then Bush selected Thomas, a doubly overwound movement conservative, who has been a beneficiary of a curious Republican form of affirmative action, segregated in "black" positions but promoted to ever higher jobs until nominated for the highest court: "the best qualified," according to George Bush. Nominating the black conservative must have seemed to Bush a stupendous act of political shrewdness, as well as magnanimity.

Unlike Souter, however, Thomas was a highly opinionated, prolific man, who in an article had even compared abortion to slavery. But the handlers assigned by the White House rehearsed the candidate to say nothing at his hearings, in imitation of Souter: soul on ice. In trying to allay the suspicion of critics, Thomas explained in his lumbering fashion how judges ought to interpret the Constitution and wound up making a statement that is likely to stand as among the most succinct summaries of the credo of the Bush era:

> I think ... it is important for us ... to eliminate agendas, to eliminate ideologies. And when one becomes a judge ... that's precisely what you start doing. You start putting the speeches away. You start putting the policy statements away. You begin to decline forming opinions in important areas that could come before your court because you want to be stripped down like a runner. So I have no agenda, senator.

With that, it became perfectly unclear whether Thomas was an ideologue masking himself as an opportunist, or vice versa, or, somehow, an overwrought amalgam of both.

Bush had turned Thomas into white space. What Thomas did in the first round of the hearings was what Michael Dukakis did in the Democratic primaries: he failed to define himself, leaving that task to his foes. With the appearance of Anita Hill, Thomas's rationale—his upward social mobility—flipped into a question of his downward psychological stability.

The Thomas nomination, for many women, is understood as a harbinger of a decision against *Roe*. If that were to happen—and Thomas were to be a crucial vote—the storm would open the gender gap with a vengeance. The explosion over Thomas's confirmation has made clear just how volatile the social issue may be. The GOP itself is not immune to internal cleavage over it. Moderate suburbanites and younger voters, who have trended Republican in the 1980s, are overwhelmingly pro-choice. They have taken for granted the option of abortion as a basic freedom. Proper Republican women of the Barbara Bush variety, moreover, do not truly believe that the lower orders of the New Right have been admitted into their club, much less given the run of it. In Texas in 1990 Republican women decided that male insensitivity in their party (in the form of the boorish Clayton Williams) was unacceptable and were decisive in electing a liberal Democrat, Ann Richards, as governor. Bush's trump card in race—Thomas—hardly plays when the game is sexual politics. A Supreme Court whose decisions on social issues were crucial in provoking a New Right has been superseded by a Supreme Court poised to swing sharply in the opposite direction. It seems likely that it may provoke an even stronger reaction.

There are other social fissures that the cultural conservatives have no interest in covering over. Indeed, they have a newly divisive, unyielding moral cause—homophobia—and they have already split the California GOP over it. Though Governor Pete Wilson had called the zealots "loonies," he decided, after thoughtful reflection, to pander to them by vetoing a gay rights bill, promptly sending his popularity plummeting. If he was a model for Bush, as some GOP politicos had suggested, he has become a cautionary one. The so-called big tent of the GOP, which supposedly can accommodate one and all, could easily turn into the big top.

For at least one reason, however, Bush was grateful for Anita Hill's testimony; he chose that very moment to veto a bill extending unemployment insurance. No other Republican president, including Reagan, had been so severe. As Hill filled the airwaves, Bush's aides frantically scurried about Washington in search of polls on another issue: the economy.

But the economy cannot be handily delivered to Bush. It has become a situation of diminishing returns. The fiscal tool of stimulation, because of the Reagan deficits and the blocked budget, is unusable. Bush cannot replicate the Reagan experience of regressive tax cuts and Keynesian military expenditure. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan is doing what he can to manipulate interest rates to prime the economy for the election; but this method does not always work if there are not appropriate economic conditions to work on. And if interest rates are lowered too much, foreign capital will be driven away.

Bush's economic policy has been to propose the panacea of a capital gains cut and, barring that, to assume a posture of passivity. There has been no more inert president on economic policy since Coolidge. "No big deal," said Secretary of the Treasury Nicholas Brady a year ago about the recession. Bush was confident that the budget agreement would stave off an economic decline. His fears about the economy were a major reason he erased his famous campaign pledge.

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But raising taxes and stymieing spending, as always, had a depressing effect.

Suddenly Saddam intervened. The recession had already begun, but Bush blamed the invasion of Kuwait for the downturn. In a press conference in December 1990 he said: "The increase in oil prices resulting directly from Saddam's invasion is hurting our country, and our economy is at best in a serious slowdown." Saddam was guilty of many crimes, but the recession did not happen to be among them. Yet winning the war, Bush had suggested, would defeat the recession. But the Gulf war, fought from inventory, had no stimulating effect; neither did the liberation of Kuwait. And Bush made no use of his extraordinary popularity to push any economic program. Above all, he was satisfied that American politics was paralyzed by the budget agreement, allowing him to play the role of the imperial president.

A year after Brady had offhandedly dismissed the recession as a minor annoyance, the Council of Economic Advisers announced that technically the recession had ended. Prosperity was around the last corner. But public pessimism has paid no heed to the official proclamation and continues to grow. More than two-thirds believe the country was on the wrong track, a massive turnaround since the war. The White House quivers.

The Senate Budget Committee last month issued a report, "An Analysis of President Bush's Economic Record," documenting the Republicans' fears. Of the presidents since World War II, the lowest rate of economic growth has been during Bush's presidency. He is the only president under whom "the average standard of living has actually declined"—at a rate of –0.4 percent annually. Under Gerald Ford, who had held the previous record for low growth, "the economy grew at nearly triple the rate." The giddy sensation that the country is on a permanent economic roll—an element crucial to the positive thinking of the Reagan era—has been drastically eroded.

Bush has few resources in his background to draw upon, a fact recognized by his former mentor, Richard Nixon. Nixon told Bush that he and Quayle should stop their endless rounds of golfing and boating during the slump, that these relaxations were not something average people identified with, especially in difficult economic times. Here was the wisdom of the master of resentment. The essence of Nixon as politician was his adroit manipulation of lower-middle-class anxieties because he was one of them. Reagan, too, was convincing as a man of the people; no matter how expensive his wife's china, he always had his father dead drunk on the front porch. In the recession of 1981-82, the worst since the Great Depression, Reagan said he would "stay the course." But Nixon, perhaps more than anyone, knows that Bush is one of them, not us. And if he were to stay the course, what course would that be?

Time and again Bush has sustained his presidency through foreign policy. Yet here too he has reached a point of diminishing returns. A mere 2 percent of the public, in the latest *New York Times*/CBS Poll, believes that foreign policy is the most important issue. Economic issues overwhelmingly dominate. Polls aside, Bush cannot play the game of nations as he wishes. His foreign policy has been dependent largely on a foreign leader—Mikhail Gorbachev—who now has little to give and a great deal to ask. From beginning to end Bush followed in Gorbachev's wake; at every turn Bush's popularity rose as a reactive effect. He had the notion that he would achieve the stable condominium with the Soviet Union that had eluded Nixon and Kissinger. But the virtue of pragmatism covered the failure of strategy. Support for the Gulf war was the last thing Gorbachev delivered. After the coup—after the Soviet Union—he can only beg for alms. The euphoria that the cold war is over has been swiftly replaced by a feeling of exhaustion. Beyond Bush's easy rhetoric about "a Europe whole and free," there is no discernible U.S. policy for making this new Europe.

In the meantime, Bush has pushed the aftermath of the Gulf war toward a peace conference in which the lineaments of a grand bargain do not exist. Without a policy in Europe, except to try to get Germany to pay for what an insolvent U.S. cannot, Bush's foreign policy has come to rest on Middle East frustration. For American public opinion, Bush's success in foreign policy—the end of the cold war and the easy rollover of the Iraqis—has legitimized the domestic agenda he wants to avoid. By flourishing his skill at foreign policy, Bush unavoidably points himself homeward.

The resources of the presidency, still, are at his disposal. He is not quite at a loss. His opponent in 1992 remains an enigma. And he has time. But the Thomas controversy has been highly suggestive of the elements of future dramas. The lack of substance imposed upon the nominee forced the White House back on sheer political technique. In Thomas, the political operatives had a candidate who could carry the weight of the negative campaign. Not since the Checkers speech had bathos been employed to such brilliant effect. Nixon, in his apologia, admitted to his mistakes, but cast them as sympathetic, humanizing points. Thomas, in the midst of his crisis, would confess nothing. He was the self-pitying Nixon reborn as a race-man. When the overlay of conservative ideology was burned away, what was revealed was the unmeltable sensibility of resentment.

But Thomas's campaign, unlike Bush's forthcoming one, had what Lee Atwater referred to as "command focus"—an overriding theme of angry innocence that could animate his wild talk of conspiracy and lynching. Without the focus, the reliance on technique, whatever the production values, may accelerate the fragmentation of the message. And yet there was a final, irreducible element apparent in the Thomas struggle that Bush himself, when cornered, has invariably found within—a savage will to power, by any means necessary. Soon it may be all that he has left. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Moving Through Time

Balzac's story "The Unknown Masterpiece" has been of extraordinary importance to many artists. As Dore Ashton tells us in *A Fable of Modern Art*, Picasso illustrated a special edition of it, and Cézanne said that his favorite character in all literature was Frenhofer, the painter-protagonist of the story. For these artists and others, Frenhofer seems to dramatize the risks, rewards, and penalties of venturing into new realms of art.

Now the French filmmaker Jacques Rivette has made a film from the story, transposing it to the present from the seventeenth century of the original and using a somewhat different emphasis. **La Belle Noiseuse** (MK2) runs a bit over four hours, which will not surprise those who know Rivette's work and which hints in advance at what his emphasis will be. He has been making films since 1949, unwaveringly serious in a wavering era, and most of them have been of exceptional length. (The best known is probably *Céline and Julie Go Boating.*) I've seen only a few of his nineteen films and have usually admired his fidelity to his aesthetics, including the principle of length, more than the work itself. Not in this case. *La Belle Noiseuse* is, in a way, about time and it needs time. And it has beauty.

At least three of Rivette's films have been built around the rehearsals of plays, so it's logical that he wanted to treat this Balzac story, which is concerned with another artistic process—the painting of a picture—and the entangling of lives with it. Rivette's title is out of Balzac: it was the title of the masterpiece that Frenhofer was painting, a portrait of La Belle Noiseuse. This was the sobriquet of a seventeenth-century courtesan; the term translates as The Beautiful Nuisance or The Beautiful Maddener-to-Distraction or something in that vicinity.

The screenplay is by Rivette, Pascal Bonitzer, and Christine Laurent. The setting is a huge chateau in southeastern France where Frenhofer lives with his wife, Liz, and where, renowned though he is, he does not paint—hasn't painted in ten years. His last attempt was an unfinished Belle Noiseuse for which his wife posed. Along comes a young painter, Nicolas, and his lover, Marianne. Nicolas, possibly trying to ingratiate himself with the great man, proposes that Marianne pose for him. Suddenly stimulated to the hope that he might accomplish his Noiseuse at last, Frenhofer agrees. Marianne, aware that she is something of a pawn here, agrees, too. All of them, including Liz, know that sooner or later the posing will be nude.

Marianne arrives next morning, and work begins, in Frenhofer's huge studio. At first she is clothed. At first he does only ink and charcoal sketches. Here and throughout the film we actually see Frenhofer working, see almost every stroke on paper or, subsequently, canvas. (The role is played by Michel Piccoli, but the hands we see at work are those of a painter, Bernard Dufour.) Before long, he tells her that there's a dressing gown hanging behind a screen. No more need be said. She goes upstairs, returns in the gown, drops it at his request, and is nude.

Now the film intensifies what has already begun: the experience of time in this creative act. Rivette often takes us through great stretches of real elapsed time, minute by minute, as Frenhofer draws or paints, as Marianne (which she comes to understand) collaborates. Rivette's chief accomplishment is to make us comprehend why this passage of time is necessary. He said once that a film is interesting "only if you have this feeling that the film pre-exists and that you are trying to reach it." Here he conjoins his own search with Frenhofer's search for his painting.

Marianne's body, like the whole film, is exquisitely lighted by the cinematographer, William Lubtchansky, who seems as intent on that body's secrets as Frenhofer is. Marianne poses, sitting or standing, as the artist requests, letting him arrange her arms and legs, her posture, as he sketches and sketches, exploring. While he works—while they work, one should say—he talks a little, sometimes referring cryptically to Rubek and Irene. They are the sculptor and his model in Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken.* The play's title is not mentioned, but its pertinence is clear enough.

Then Frenhofer moves to oils and canvas. The communion between artist and model, though she never quite sheds a tinge of resentment, though he never sees her as anything but a challenge, creates difficulties around them. Nicolas becomes almost jealous. Liz becomes dif-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

City of Hope. *An acid etching of moral sleaze in an American city. John Sayles wrote it, but his directing and editing are what really impress. (Reviewed 10/14/91)* **The Indian Runner.** *Two brothers, one a highway patrolman, the other an outlaw. Sean Penn's screenplay lays on too much symbolism from the title, but he understands the milieu and directs his good cast very well. (10/21/91)* **The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe.** *Jane Wagner wrote and Lily Tomlin performs this film of Tomlin's one-person stage show. Though some characters get a bit blurry, much of it is sharply funny. (10/7/91)* **Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll.** *Another one-person stage show on film. Written by the performer, Eric Bogosian, who is less funny than Tomlin but more forceful. His characters, too, blur a bit; still he, too, is sharp-eyed. (10/7/91)* **—SK**

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ferently jealous, because Marianne is "mating" with Frenhofer in a way that she failed to do. Yet neither the artist nor his wife is sanguine about the painting's progress.

As we watch, one of the great themes of art suffuses the screen, the erotics of the nude. Artists don't often do paintings or statues of unattractive nudes. (Rodin is one exception, especially his nude of Balzac!) Few would argue today that artists use nudes sheerly because the body is beautiful: the sexuality of that body, male or female, is part of the artwork. Frenhofer never makes the slightest advance toward Marianne, yet the film is charged with sex because of her nudity and Frenhofer's exploration of it on canvas. (We see less and less of the entire canvas as time goes on.) We sense in him a possible return to more than one kind of potency, whether or not the painting is pleasing him. And this may be one reason why Liz, through marital discoveries, oddly and contradictorily resents the painting.

The ending of the art enterprise has ambiguities—in the varied reactions to the finished work. We don't see it. Frenhofer, displeased, doesn't destroy it: he bricks it up in his studio wall, which is a seeming act of confidence in those who may discover it later. Rather quickly, he paints another Noiseuse, which we do see. This is Rivette's one mistake. The crouched nude, back to us, surrounded by a sea of pale blue, seems a pallid conclusion to all that has gone before. But at least it throws the emphasis again on what *has* gone before, the passage through time in a creative enterprise.

Frenhofer's dealer likes this painting, however. And the four principals at least survive. In a sense, the story is told from Marianne's point of view: her voice-over begins and ends the film. It is her voice that assures us about the resumption of lives on the other side of this experience, lives that have been affected but are resumable.

Of the four principals, Jane Birkin, as Liz, is the weakest; once again she is professionally sensitive. David Bursztein is sufficiently convincing as Nicolas. Emanuelle Béart, who played the title role in *Manon of the Spring*, is perfect as Emmanuelle. She has the kind of beauty that increases rather than immediately stuns; and, tacitly, insinuatingly, affectingly, she evokes all the reluctances and curiosities of the role.

Inevitably, however, the film depends on Piccoli. In his long career he has often been excellent. Here he gives the performance of his life: coiled and shrewd, committed yet cynical, almost bemused at being warmed again by a fire he had thought dead. Piccoli has always combined a suggestion of intellect with

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one of slightly wearied animality. Here that fusion reaches its apex.

I've heard that there is a two-hour version of *La Belle Noiseuse.* I wouldn't want to see it. I can't argue that absolutely every brush stroke, every discarded sketch is essential; but the exploration of time as an ingredient of artistic creation has long been Rivette's interest, and he has found here his ideal subject. His film is a better artwork than anything we see of Frenhofer's on his studio walls. *La Belle Noiseuse* is a mature accomplishment, and like most good films, it's as replenishing to think about later as to watch. •

Disunited States

BY ALAN RYAN

The Good Society
by Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton

(Knopf, 347 pp., $25)

Acts of Compassion
by Robert Wuthnow

(Princeton University Press, 334 pp., $24.95)

The current taste for jeremiads against the social, moral, political, economic, legal, and sexual failings of America raises a rather obvious question. Is the United States more of a mess than the rest of the world? Asked bluntly, the question answers itself. The inhabitants of New Jersey are not waging guerrilla warfare against the inhabitants of Pennsylvania. Texas and New Mexico have not been admitted to the United Nations as separate nations. The Kansans are not scouring the prairie for food and water, and the poor of California do not go to bed fearing the knock on the door.

The United States, in short, is not in the political, economic, climatic, social, or even moral messes that plague the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and sections of Eastern Europe, most of sub-Saharan Africa, El Salvador, Guatemala, and many other parts of the world. But is it in more of a mess than more favored parts of the world? Are we worse off than Britain, France, Germany, Scandinavia, or Japan? That is not a question that answers itself. The gross national product of the United States is still the highest per capita in the world; but the question that requires an answer is not the question that income statistics can answer.

We know that the inhabitants of the United States are astonishingly rich, by the standard measures. We consume vastly more food, oil, medical services, more of almost anything you care to name, than anyone else in the world. We also jail, rape, murder, and judicially execute a higher proportion of the population than any other Western society. The great American fear, in fact, has always been that we have become rich as individuals and poor as a society. And *that,* according to Robert Bellah and his fellow authors, is exactly what has happened. Bellah and company say that our lives lack meaning, even when they don't lack worldly resources. "Why," they ask,

> representing only 5 percent of the world's population do we consume more than 50 percent of the world's drugs? Why do we spend $160 billion a year on entertainment, an industry of which television is a major element, which diverts but on the whole does not challenge? It would seem that the way we live creates so much anxiety that we spend enormous amounts of money and time, often at great expense to body and spirit, to drown out that anxiety, rather than focusing on the activities that allow us to be the active, happy, responsible people we really want to be.

The answer is not merely that we are silly, hedonistic, shortsighted beings. It is that we have exhausted our social and political institutions in the same way that farmers in the dust bowl exhausted the soil they farmed. We have been thrown back on our individual resources, and they are too scanty to help. "And the malaise is palpable: a loss of meaning in family and job, a distrust of politics, a disillusion with organized religion."

The fear that the individualism of the modern world is destructive of settled institutions, and in the end destructive of itself, has been a recurrent theme in European sociology since the 1880s, and in American politics for just about as long, as Bellah and his colleagues know. Indeed, their title is self-consciously lifted from Walter Lippmann's book of the same name, which appeared in 1937; and one of their ambitions is to contribute to a reconstruction of American institutions by reviving the "public philosophy" to which Lippmann and John Dewey contributed in their own day. Their guiding thought might have been lifted word for word from the NEW REPUBLIC articles that Dewey wrote about "Individualism Old and New" in 1929-30. Individual lives lack meaning, he argued, if they are not sustained by social institutions that will provide them with meaning.

It is a rather simple thought, but for the past dozen years or so it has been fashionable in academic circles under the label of "communitarianism." To be sure, the positive views of those who call themselves communitarians are pretty various: some call themselves "civic republicans," some are social democrats, a very few are whole-hearted conservatives who think the modern world has been some kind of mistake. But the denials of the new communitarians are clearer than their affirmations. They are sure, all of them, that they oppose what they take to be the intellectual and moral errors of liberal individualism. They believe that we are born not free and equal, but dependent and "embedded" members of society. They insist that this is a saving truth, and that we shall go terribly wrong if we forget it.

This is not the first time that Bellah and his friends have been to this well. In 1985 they published *Habits of the Heart,* a best-selling account of the bewildered state of the average American. It surveyed the moral culture of American individualism and built up an alarming portrait of ordinary citizens who felt variously estranged from contemporary society, abandoned by it, or baffled by the mixed signals that they receive from it about success and failure, happiness and misery, vice and virtue, duties and rights. *Habits of the Heart* was a sentimental book that mixed social and cultural history with the reportorial techniques of pop sociology and the comforting exhortations of self-help literature, and innumerable

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readers found it extremely convincing. A part of its appeal was its suggestion that things were alarming rather than desperate, difficult but not beyond hope of improvement. It did not breathe terminal depression about the state of American culture. It merely demanded more anxiety, a higher level of nervousness about American individualism, about the demands that the American enthusiasm for "finding oneself" places on American culture.

By comparison with its predecessor, *The Good Society* is more institutional, less personal; it is not much enlivened by minibiographies. Such individuals as appear in its pages occupy administrative positions in government or churches. Bellah and his colleagues talk of a shift from prescription toward analysis, but their shift is rather from an account of individual bewilderment to a picture of social malfunction. The prescriptive manner is just as marked—no bad thing, either—but it is directed at the reconstruction of social and political institutions as much as at the moral convictions of individuals.

The prevailing tone of the book is set by the little photograph of the five authors that decorates its cover. They stand or sit, clean and tidy, at ease and informal, jacketless and tieless, without a trace of anxiety, smiling to the camera, bright, earnest, and guileless, epitomizing in their own selves the message that they preach. Their work is a collective project, after all, not a piece of individual self-enhancement; it is highly readable, not academically arcane. They are happy with themselves and each other, because they have been doing just what *The Good Society* advises—not looking for personal self-realization or academic advancement, but contributing to the revival of public philosophy. They have been conversing with Lippmann and Dewey and Niebuhr, away from the babble of the sound bite and the chatter of the cost-benefit analysts who, they say, dominate the academy and the government alike.

It would be curmudgeonly (well, maybe not too curmudgeonly) to complain that they look too good to be true, too much like an advertiser's image of five concerned citizens to carry complete conviction. But surely it would not be inappropriate, in the light of their own description of their own society, to wonder how they can look quite so happy in a world that is going to the dogs. Anyway, their book is easily read, a model of painlessly persuasive writing. In fact, it has an unexpectedly consensual quality: its litany of complaints against contemporary American life will be endorsed by most shades of American opinion. By suggesting that we are all victims of social processes that nobody intended, it does not accuse anyone in particular of anything very wicked.

The litany is familiar. Wherever you look, our institutions don't work. American schools are terrible. Children can't learn because they have had their minds rotted by television. Nor do plans for reform inspire confidence, when the only standard by which anyone thinks of measuring improvement is the output of young people who will make productive but otherwise mindless workers. Universities offer no lead in an educational revival. The more distinguished they become, the more they despise teaching. And specialization in research makes the university narrow, competitive, and factorylike, and no place for constructive thought about the good life. And the churches offer no lead either, for they are too busy with their own members to think about society at large.

Meanwhile American industry is beset by stagnating productivity, the American family is threatened by the need for both parents to hold down full-time jobs, the American legal system is besieged by individuals and groups yelling about their rights and silent about their responsibilities. The only thing that Americans trust is money, but they know that they may lose their job at the drop of a hat when someone in a head office decides that their little fragment of a multinational holding company is adding too little to big brother's profits. And the American political system is incapable of responding to any, let alone to all, of this, for the new rules of political success mean that you can govern or you can get elected, but you cannot do both.

As I say, *The Good Society* will strike a chord in many bosoms. Who has *not* felt that an abortion debate conducted as a shrieking match between "the right to choose" and "the right to life" misses every important issue? What parent has *not* felt that a family that never sits down to a meal together is less like a family than a bunch of strangers who happen to share bathroom and kitchen privileges? Who has *not* been torn between the needs of a small community heavily dependent on one local employer and the need for that same employer to protect itself against bankruptcy or takeover? Radical readers of this book will not demur at the authors' claim that forty years of cold war politics came close to destroying in the United States and elsewhere just those political and intellectual liberties for whose sake the United States assumed leadership of the free world after 1945, and even its more conservative readers will not resist the thought that the Vietnam War was a failure of foreign policy and a social disaster at home. Liberals who chronically distrust all talk of "community" and "community values" should be disarmed by *The Good Society*'s invocation of John Dewey's "great community."

Both in *The Public and Its Problems*, which the authors cite repeatedly, and in *Individualism Old and New*, which they cite not at all, Dewey was at pains to insist that the "great community" meant the modern world—not an old-fashioned, claustrophobic, small-town America. The secular-minded might feel that there is a vein of religiose sentimentality in Bellah and his colleagues,

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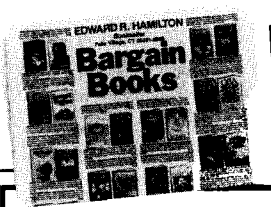

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but they are at least entirely unsectarian. Like Niebuhr, they regard religion as a sort of celebration of trust in the world and its goodness: "Trust of faith, like parental love, is a gift. It comes to individuals and groups in particular experiences, at particular times and places. Niebuhr did not say it comes only to Jews and Christians, or that it comes only to people who think of themselves as religious, but that to whomever it comes it comes as a gift. And when it does come, it brings a great joy and enables us to live responsibly with our fellow beings."

What is wrong with *The Good Society* is not that it is wicked, but that it is mushy. It will doubtless be compared to Tocqueville, as was *Habits of the Heart*; but this is Tocqueville by way of Robert Fulghum. For the book is thrice mushy: analytically mushy, morally mushy, politically mushy. Analytically, because of its sociological foundations. In an appendix on "Institutions in Sociology and Public Philosophy," Bellah traces the book's allegiances to the turn-of-the-century sociology of Emile Durkheim, who was besotted with the idea that society was something more than, and perhaps other than, the individuals who composed it. Like Bellah and his colleagues, however, Durkheim was too much of a liberal, too devout a believer in the importance of individual morality to conclude that individuals were unimportant, or merely the product of society in all they did, felt, and aspired to. The resulting mixture, therefore, was intellectually unstable. Apart from the general injunction to take social institutions seriously, and to beware of explaining everything in quasi-economic terms, it was unclear in Durkheim's day, as it is unclear in Bellah's day, just what follows from the fact that we are both the creation and the creators of our society.

Once again, the negatives of the communitarians are clearer than the positives. Bellah and his colleagues follow Durkheim in blaming our ills on "individualism." Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and lately James Coleman have a lot to answer for. (Coleman is a distinguished statistician and educational sociologist who recently published a 1,000-page book arguing that the economists' apparatus of cost, benefit, and rational calculation is all that a sociologist needs.) They have rendered us incoherent: "We do not know what we want or need," say Bellah et al., because "we have a Lockean ideology in a non-Lockean world." Or, "Institutions have become corrupt; means have wrongly been turned into ends. Even when we know what we want, we are so enamored with certain means that we are not able to make the changes necessary to get what we want." Why is this? Because "economic institutions have invaded other institutions (politics, religion, family, etc.), making it harder for them to do what they were originally intended to do." I almost hesitate to observe, even in passing, that to talk about the "original intentions" of institutions is profoundly unsociological and individualistic.

This corrosive individualism is identified by gesticulation: it is variously labeled "Lockean," "utilitarian," and "radical," but its real target is our old acquaintance *Homo economicus*, the fiction of rational self-interested man on which classical economic theory was founded. Bellah and his colleagues have the grace to acknowledge that "Lockean" individualism has nothing whatever to do with John Locke, but they really ought to have learned since they wrote the endnotes to *Habits of the Heart* that their views of utilitarianism have nothing whatsoever in common with the views of any actual utilitarians—who think that we should promote the general welfare rather than our own—and that "radical" individualists, of whom Nietzsche was the most eloquent spokesman, have always despised both utilitarianism and the rational pursuit of self-interest.

In any case, the thought that the United States has been done in by an excess of reason and self-interest is hardly plausible. Bellah and his colleagues are right to shudder when enthusiasts for "rational choice" argue for a market in babies as a way of solving in one fell swoop the shortage of adoptable babies. But they themselves write that the cold war was fought out of genuine moral passion, and they themselves are as inclined as most of us to think that the so-called underclass is plagued by a lack of rational calculation rather than an excess of it. Conversely, when they discuss the failings of American politics, they make the very familiar point that the coherent formation and implementation of policy are frustrated by the absence of the party loyalty and party discipline that you find in European politics; but surely the incoherence of American politics has little to do with an overdose of rational self-interest, and a lot to do with certain perversities of the Constitution—particularly with the way that federalism encourages beggar-my-neighbor economics among the states and the way that the separation of powers encourages political deadlock.

Has American society really been so thoroughly corroded by individualism and its concomitant perversities? Robert Wuthnow's book makes an interesting comparison to Robert Bellah's. In *Acts of Compassion*, Wuthnow asks some of the most anxiety-inducing questions of all. How concerned can we be about our own selves before we cease to care about others? How far can we go in insisting that we are the captains of our souls before we start ignoring our obligations to people in need or distress? Wuthnow paints a less gloomy picture of our present condition than Bellah and his friends have done. That's not surprising: Wuthnow's book is a survey of the different ways in which Americans do respond, after all, to the needs of the sick, the injured, the poor, the hungry, the homeless.

Wuthnow has been struck, like Bellah and his colleagues, by the extent to which the people he interviewed were unsure of their own motives and hesitant about providing reasons why they have put themselves out to help other people. The admirable young man who last year dived into an icy lake to rescue a drowning woman is not sure whether he did it because it looks good on his application to medical school or because that "is just the kind of person he is." You might say, and Wuthnow agrees, that why he dove matters rather less than the fact that he dove at all. Still, Wuthnow fears that we rely too heavily on people just happening to find it "fulfilling" to help other people and that we are not socially or institutionally compassionate. Millions of good Americans somehow don't add up to a good society.

Wuthnow's book focuses fairly narrowly on what its title suggests, that is, on what moves people to assist others, by visiting them in hospitals, joining first aid squads and engaging in heroics on the highway, working with the homeless, the alcoholic, the senile, or whatever. What it loses in width, however, it gains in depth. Wuthnow's questions are more fine-tuned than Bellah's: whether committed church-goers, for example, do more for others than non-attenders. (The answer appears to be that they do, but also that it's a spurious correlation, since people who do a lot for others tend to be "joiners," and they join churches as well as PTAs, Alcoholics Anonymous, and a host of other entities.)

Like Bellah, Wuthnow gives his work an intellectual structure and a degree of "human interest" by centering each chapter on the lives and thoughts of

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individuals whose motivation for engaging in voluntary work for others falls into a particular pattern—religion, a search for fulfillment, a wish to reciprocate kindnesses received, and so on. And like Bellah, he emphasizes the way that all motivation needs some form of social reflection and reinforcement if it is to be effective. And yet, for all his alarm about the condition of moral reasoning in American society, Wuthnow acknowledges, as careful observers always have, the extraordinary readiness of Americans to engage in assorted forms of voluntary benevolence.

He is happy to concede that Americans, regardless of their motivations, are in the main a generous people. Perhaps that is why Wuthnow is less ready to adopt the preacher's mantle than Bellah. His anxieties come out as questions, rather than as proposals for a new dawn of civic consciousness. How can we manage without the sorts of social pressures that make generosity compulsory in societies simpler than ours? We shall probably stagger on much as we have done. Human frailty being what it is, we all have every reason to encourage whatever sparks of generosity we detect in other people, and as long as we do that the generous will enjoy life more than the misanthropic.

The American problem, then, is not self-interest, full stop. It is finding ways of looking after the interests of the public at large as opposed to those of well-placed anti-social groups and individuals; or of looking after long-term interests rather than short-term interests; or of looking after the interests of the unrepresented as well as the interests of the represented. A society of rational self-interested persons governed by dispassionate utilitarians would be a lot less likely than we are to spend money on high-tech weapons rather than public transport, would see the absurdity of confiding the country's health to a system run by private insurance companies, and would not allow its fear of criminals to trap it into wasting the resources that we waste on the criminal justice system. Coolly rational individuals would be less likely than we are to plunge in and out of marriage, just as a more utilitarian society would count the costs to children of parental self-indulgence, and would think of ways to make good behavior more attractive to those of whom it was demanded. Of course we are not entirely rational; but contrary to Bellah and his friends, it would be no bad thing if there were more reason in our midst.

One wouldn't belabor the point if it weren't that the appeal of *The Good Society* rests so heavily on it sogginess. Its authors aim to rebuild the institutions that enforce a sense of social obligation, and to persuade us to feel fulfilled by doing good and not just by doing well. But they are so busy invoking the ghosts of Dewey and Lippmann that they inherit all the old unclarities. Like Dewey, they insist that the cure for the failures of democracy is more democracy; but since Dewey we have had another forty years of the electorate giving large majorities to presidential and congressional candidates who have been in various combinations duplicitous and incompetent. By what extension of democracy is this electorate to do better?

Bellah says: by cutting out political advertising by individual candidates, thus reducing at a blow the need to raise ludicrous sums of money and the resulting networks of obligation to those who provide the money. Fine, fine, it's what every other Western democracy does. But is it really "more democracy"? It is not clear that the electorate thinks so, and it is clear that the Supreme Court considers it unconstitutional. Other countries that impose such restrictions do so to save democracy from itself. Or take the obvious failings of the American welfare state. Bellah and his colleagues hanker after what most of Europe takes for granted: a decent health service, more governmental control over the employment decisions of corporations, the government's acknowledgment of the obligation to be landlord of last resort. But will Americans get these because of electoral pressure? It seems unlikely.

At this point it is no good to demand a return to Dewey *and* Lippmann, since the real situation is Dewey *or* Lippmann. Bellah and his friends are quite right to remind us that Lippmann, at least most of the time, wanted active government, a welfare state, a rational and uncorrupt administration. Still, it was not an informed and enlightened public opinion that Lippmann came to rely on after World War I. Lippmann came to think extremely poorly of the common man's capacities, as *Public Opinion* and *The Phantom Public* make plain. And it was over just this skepticism about democratic politics that Lippmann and Dewey fell out in the 1920s.

So why don't Bellah and his friends take the elitist Lippmann seriously? If the failures of government, the legal system, and much else besides are to be laid at the feet of an idle and greedy elite, rather than attributed to the corruption of the masses by rational self-interest, a preference for Lippmann suggests that we should try to infuse that elite with the spirit of noblesse oblige and the technical intelligence fostered by such institutions as the French École Nationale d'Administration, rather than try, Dewey-like, to imbue the public with good feelings. No doubt Lippmann was an entirely less attractive figure than Dewey, but it is hard to believe that he was less politically astute.

I don't mean that nagging the elite is particularly likely to work. It is obviously quite impossible at present to feel any great confidence in either the American electorate or the American political and administrative classes. An electorate that consistently votes for impossibilities is about as depressing as politicians who stupefy the voters and administrators who lack the self-confidence to educate their political masters. Still, the elites are fewer, moderately attentive to the world around them, and more easily addressed by such "public philosophers" as may arise; and in those countries that have the institutions that Bellah and his friends admire, it was the likes of Lord Beveridge who created them.

ALAN RYAN is a Mellon Foundation Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, where he is writing a study of the social and political philosophy of John Dewey.

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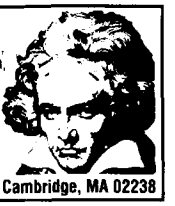

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The Life Notebooks

By April Bernard

Anne Sexton: A Biography by Diane Wood Middlebrook

(Houghton Mifflin, 488 pp., $24.95)

In the 1950s men had jobs, women had breasts, cars had fenders, and poets had the heebie-jeebies. How could it have been otherwise? A postwar lunge of American prosperity, which tried to legislate conformity and shut down interior demons, bred its own destruction. For once, poets were the vanguard, anticipating the millions of dissenting voices that were to shout and keen and rejoice throughout the next decade. It was a position they had occupied perhaps only once before in the English-speaking world, after World War I, when poets wrote about the horrors they had seen; and their indictment is now fully a part of the historical record. For the usually marginalized genre of verse, such achievements of public stature represent rare moments of "crossover." It is no wonder that our current generation of poets is embittered by its banishment once more to the wings.

By 1960 Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, W. D. Snodgrass's *Heart's Needle*, John Berryman's *77 Dream Songs*, and Anne Sexton's *To Bedlam and Part Way Back* had been published. In this poetry, the aggressively asserted private life self-destructs as the internal is made external, like a newborn exposed on a mountainside. In any event, the era of "confessional" poetry had arrived as something brand-new. Like all nomers, this one has about it as much of a miss as a hit. If by confessional is meant "private" or even "shameful" material, then lyric poetry has never lacked confessional poets—from Sappho and Catullus to Coleridge and Wordsworth to Dickinson and Whitman. If "confessional" is to be construed in a narrower, religious sense—that is, as the confession of sin (which is the confession of the mortal condition) to God or his emissary in order to make penance and receive temporary cleansing—then there is also a host of poets, such as Donne, Herbert, and Hopkins, who fit the bill.

The velvet curtains and shadowy grille of the Catholic church confessional were banned by Luther. Instead, there is a peculiarly Protestant strain of confession that finds itself expressed in the work of Lowell, Sexton, Snodgrass, et al., where the condemnation of one's neighbors is a social regulator at least as effective as the fires of hell. A kind of pre-emptive confessionalism—"I'll admit I did this and then you can't touch me"—seems to be at work here.

If it was a strategy, alas, it was an ineffectual one. Any confessional poet who imagined that confession would forestall criticism underestimated his neighbors' own wish to witness and, paradoxically, to "confess" what they had seen. Now Diane Wood Middlebrook's biography of Anne Sexton is on the best-seller list. The national sweet tooth for the shame and the degradation of its public figures, far greater now than any countering tendency to admire and emulate them, has found another bombe in this life study. This fuss, the histrionic op-ed handwringing over Anne Sexton's psychiatrist Dr. Martin Orne and his big mouth, only adds to the delight of the consumer, who is allowed to feel righteous indignation as he reads what he believes Orne should not have revealed about his former patient.

Unless one is a psychiatrist, however, it seems quite beside the point to worry too much about Orne's ethics. Why not worry about the ethics of the poet's daughter Linda Gray Sexton, or any of the dozens of other chin-waggers who contributed to this ghastly and baroque narrative? For shrink or priest, friend or foe, the ethical question is the same. The dead, after all, are dead, and either you shut up about them or you don't.

That said, it is important to add that in the case of Sexton, discretion would probably be as much beside the point in death as it had been in life. No less a friend than Maxine Kumin, whose devotion to Sexton is not to be doubted, maintains that the airing of unwashed laundry (an especially apt metaphor in this case—Sexton was a lousy housekeeper and wonderfully unapologetic about it) in these pages is precisely what the poet would have wished. Others—Middlebrook, Linda Gray Sexton, Erica Jong, Orne himself—have contributed spirited defenses of the book in the media. Somewhat less spectacularly, other relatives have expressed dismay. It cannot be doubted that Sexton herself would have loved the fuss, the controversy, and the delicious opportunity for hurt feelings that this has afforded everyone. But the best-seller status of her life would have no doubt made her happiest of all.

A businesslike approach to her work and her career marked Sexton from the beginning. It is true, in the much-mythologized history she liked to tell, that she was a suburban Boston "housewife" and that she was "going crazy" after a suicide attempt in 1957 when she met with a psychiatrist named Martin Orne who prompted her to write about her experiences. Like many myths, however, this one serves a function: to show that poetry was something that saved the poet, which was undoubtedly true, but also that poetry was something that "happened" to her, passively. The latter is demonstrably untrue. How many psychotherapists in this large world in this long century have encouraged obviously thwarted patients to pursue art as therapy? Many, I would guess. But not too many patients grabbed the ball and ran like Sexton did.

Within months of her first stabs at writing poems, she enrolled in a poetry workshop. This was a woman who had always felt inadequate in school and who had not gone to college, who was recovering from a nervous breakdown, who would frequently lapse into trances. At first she wouldn't go alone to the class—a friend chaperoned her—but that shouldn't disguise the size and the courage of her act. Nor its willfulness. Orne and his patient agreed that writing about her madness and her stints in institutions would "help" others like her, and no doubt generosity played a part—but again disguise has been provided for a forthright ambition that many women, especially Sexton, would have found hard to own up to in 1957.

Within a year of the publication of her first poem, Sexton's work appeared in forty magazines. Her industry was amazing; and it rarely flagged in the years that followed, despite periodic breakdown the distractions of love affairs, and the raising of two daughters. In seventeen years, until her death by suicide in 1974, Sexton published seven books of poems (and wrote enough for two more posthumous collections) and a long play, *Mercy Street*; and her subject matter broke ground, as her gruesomely vivid imagination took on a childhood marked by incest and an adulthood awash in psychic torments. Although her husband,

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Kayo, a businessman, supported the family, Sexton's own earnings from grants and teaching and readings grew. For a brief period in the early 1970s she was the family's sole support (a poet!) while her husband started a new business. She knew all about sales; she knew all about hard work; and she knew how to reach her public.

The wish, the need, and above all the gift to please others defined Sexton's life. As a child, she wanted desperately to win the love of her glamorous, high-living parents and her great-aunt Nana. Later, she was preposterously anxious to please her therapists, to please men sexually, to charm her daughters and her friends. The violently disarranged psyche that could see itself only through the eyes of others: that was the madness itself. Moreover, the headlong way with which she went at things ensured that the business of pleasing backfired. Hers was the kind of devotion so singular that any one enthusiasm betrayed all others. Finally, as she grew more popular, her biggest wish was to please the audience for her poems. And thereby she betrayed her own gifts. The sloppiness, the pandering, the winking and woozing of her later poems—in *The Book of Folly*, *The Death Notebooks*, and *The Awful Rowing Toward God*, all of which sold very well—insulted many who loved her and valued her talent.

Critical to an understanding of this, also, is the story of drugs. Sexton was prescribed an appalling array of tranquilizers, mood elevators, barbiturates, and who knows what else. Virtually every night of her adult life she swallowed a clutch of pills to go to sleep. Thorazine, a powerful anti-psychotic, eventually became central to the medical control of her emotional condition—although no one drug ever held exclusive sway over her system—and she would periodically "binge" by going off the drug so that she could write. ("Thorazine, they say, is supposed to make the rhymer go away," she said.) And always there was alcohol, in quantities that seem scarcely credible in these more wary times. Although obviously Sexton had the constitution of a Percheron, as she aged the strain began to tell. Something more than overtheatricality drags at the work, so that the last poems are little more than loose bundles of metaphors, none too fresh, in service of the central messages: I am unwell, I am unloved, I am disgusting, I long for death.

Another '60s burnout? A Janis Joplin for the literary set? Oh well, maybe. Sexton was a performer in person as well as on the page; her reading fees were up to $1,000 a shot by the time of her death (when $100, at most, was the norm for established poets), and she even, briefly, had a rock group backup for her readings. (They were billed as Anne Sexton and Her Kind.) But explaining her away as a phenomenon of an era explains very little. Fortunately, Middlebrook succumbs to no such temptation in this biography; Sexton's life is particularized, examined minutely. If merely a collection of symptoms rather than a person appears before us, this may be a reflection of the shattered nature of the subject's self. But the fragmentation also owes much to Orne, Sexton's first psychiatrist and, through this study, the last word on her. The documents that he released chronicling his many years as Sexton's therapist are exhaustively detailed, because for much of that time their sessions were recorded on tape as an aide-mémoire for the patient. But Orne's contribution to this biography is far more than documentary; his analysis of the poet seems to have shaped Middlebrook's own assessment, subtly and not so subtly.

Crudely, it is this. Sexton was crazy; Orne put her on the path to poetry, which made her life manageable; then Orne left his Boston practice, Sexton was obliged to turn to other therapists, and she slowly lost her grip and finally killed herself. But this self-important scenario is only a part. Orne also seems to have contributed two major attitudes to Middlebrook's biography. One is that Sexton's marriage was an anchor for sanity. Perhaps; but consider that Kayo Sexton, a salesman, was constantly away on business, which caused his wife anguish and certainly didn't discourage her from having messy affairs. Consider as well that their intimacy was marked by drinking and violence—the explanation for which, arrived at thanks to Orne, was that Sexton wanted to repeat a paradigm of punishment and forgiveness, and therefore she "drove" Kayo to beat her. Actually, it seems that the most important benefit of the marriage was that Kayo's mother tirelessly filled in as a second mother to the children, Linda and Joy. Not only did she provide them with some sort of normal parent, but she also freed the poet to pursue her art.

The other, more disturbing gloss that Orne has provided concerns Sexton's childhood sexual traumas at the hands of her father, her great-aunt, and, most obliquely, her mother. Orne maintains that Sexton's memories are not literally true; he goes on to assert that it doesn't "matter" if they're true or not, since they were true for the patient. Middlebrook seems to reach an impasse on this question; she cites numerous other opinions of those who knew Anne Sexton who say that she unquestionably manifested the characteristics of someone who had been sexually abused as a child. But Middlebrook's honesty as a biographer compels her also to include the maze of versions that Sexton told of that abuse, and to observe that Sexton often lied about all sorts of things.

Still, the haziness remains troubling—if only because this biography also reports the distressing news that Anne Sexton used her elder daughter, Linda, for her own sexual purposes. Apparently the scenario involved the mother masturbating in bed next to the adolescent, and, on one terrible occasion, kissing her at the same time. If Sexton was repeating the pattern of abuse by her great-aunt Nana that she had reported to Orne, then this is one kind of story; if not, it is a different sort of story, although no doubt the pain inflicted on her daughter remains roughly the same. Orne, following Freud's now much-attacked position that memories of incest are often fantasies, thinks it doesn't matter. Maybe the answer cannot be found; but surely the truth matters anyway.

Middlebrook does an extraordinary job of weaving the autobiography contained in the poems through the life as lived. Reproductions of drafts of early poems that show Sexton's prosodical geometries in action are fascinating; they help remind us how thoroughly formal the world of mainstream poetry had continued to be (despite modernism) in the 1950s—and how gradual was the relaxation into more idiosyncratic modes. Although it was not true of many of her contemporaries, it seems the peculiar weakness of Sexton that she got lost without the map of formality—and not simply because her subject matter seemed less clumsy held in check by precisions of meter and rhyme. Today her poems on the celebrations and the degradations of the female body, and the objections they raised, seem quaint ("'Menstruation at Forty' was the straw that broke this camel's back," wrote poet Louis Simpson in a review of *Live or Die* in 1966). Sexton may have constitutionally required a formal structure to hold in check the redundancies and mawkishness that dominate her freer poems.

At the same time, Middlebrook rightly affirms Sexton's originality where other critics have made much of the fact that she had studied with Lowell and that she and Sylvia Plath were friends. She is in no way a copy of either. For one thing, few poets could have hoped to approach Lowell's offhand learnedness, his sym-

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phonic ear, or the bone-bred hauteur that infuse his poems, so that a "confessional" description of something as banal as brushing his teeth could be made to sound like the levee of Louis XVI. And Plath is Plath, with the bitter brilliance that shines more fiercely with the passage of time. Sexton had only her own foolish attempt to claim kinship (in one of her very worst poems, "Sylvia's Death") to blame for the invidious comparison.

But one mystery left virtually unaddressed is the perennial one of charm. Sexton had it in spades; but except for the occasional testimonial in these pages—and the evidence of dozens of smitten lovers of both sexes—we don't feel it here. Perhaps we know too much about her; perhaps charm depends on the selective lighting a performer throws upon herself. Of course enchantment often works against the enchanted's better judgment; and where Sexton the performer still has the capacity to charm is in her poems—although for this reader, those occasions are nearly all confined to the first two books, *To Bedlam and Part Way Back* (1960) and *All My Pretty Ones* (1962).

She had a gift for aphorism that was at times elegant: "I am linen on a shelf"; "To be drunk is to be intimate with a fool. / I will try it shortly"; "Oh la la la la, / this music swims back to me"; "*that good nurse.* / She stays in my hand / a mild white mouse." But too often it was fake witty—"The cradle is a grave place"—or just godawful grandstanding, like the famous last lines of her book *Live or Die*: "I say *Live, Live* because of the sun, / the dream, the excitable gift." Sexton had the way of tricking up cheap sentiment and making it ring—so that, as with some pop songs, you can't get the lyrics out of your mind.

What stays in memory are fragments. Sexton's poems are almost always too long, too windy, and distracted, diluting their charm and their power. An exception is "Just Once," published in 1969 with the collection *Love Poems*, at fifteen lines one of the shortest poems she published and one that takes a single rhetorical swoop from beginning to end.

> Just once I knew what life was for.
> In Boston, quite suddenly, I understood;
> walked there along the Charles River,
> watched the lights copying themselves,
> all neoned and strobe-hearted, opening
> their mouths as wide as opera singers;
> counted the stars, my little campaigners,
> my scar daisies, and knew that I walked my
> love
> on the night green side of it and cried
> my heart to the eastbound cars and cried
> my heart to the westbound cars and took
> my truth across a small humped bridge
> and hurried my truth, the charm of it,
> home
> and hoarded these constants into morning
> only to find them gone.

Its very brevity is a virtue; the swiftness here of conversational speech seems easy, the way the moment of the poem vanishes in keeping with its meaning. But even in these few short lines, we can point to the overuse of "all," to the cute possessive "my" appended throughout to the external world, to the hiccupping profusion of commas that plagued her poems.

What to make of the fact that Sexton is one of the most widely read of all American poets, that she spoke and still speaks to so many readers? She was not a naive, not a folk poet. ("She saw sincerity as a *technique*, the style that happened to fit what she had to say," says the poet George MacBeth.) Her poems are not very good, but some fragments are gorgeous. Her life, her horribly fragmented life, appears as one more indictment of the American family, one more triumph of madness over artifice, one more testimonial of What I Did For Love.

APRIL BERNARD is the author of a book of poems, *Blackbird Bye Bye* (Vintage), and a novel, *Pirate Jenny* (W.W. Norton).

The Road to Death

BY DANIEL JONAH GOLDHAGEN

The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution by Richard Breitman

(Knopf, 335 pp., $23)

Himmler: Reichsführer-SS by Peter Padfield

(Henry Holt, 656 pp., $29.95)

The Holocaust continues to be one of the most intensively studied events of twentieth-century Western history. Scholars and non-scholars alike fathom it for the understanding it may yield about the nature of "human nature" and the fragility of civilization. Jews ponder it for the lessons it may offer on the precariousness of their existence. Germans wrestle with its legacy of guilt and shame, and with its significance for their national identity. In Germany, moreover, the Holocaust continues to intrude into politics, and politics continues, not surprisingly, to intrude into scholarship about the Holocaust.

A bitter and protracted controversy, known as the *Historikerstreit*, raged a few years ago in West Germany's newspapers, magazines, and journals. It was ostensibly about the Holocaust and Nazism, but it was really a struggle over contemporary German politics. Conservative revisionists attempted to free Germans from Hitler's shadow by arguing in different ways that the Nazi horrors were not singular, that peoples other than Germans also have blood-stained pasts, that the Nazi crimes were an aberration, and not an organic part, of Nazi Germany. This cynical attempt at rewriting history failed to achieve its purpose, and it made little impression on the European and American publics' conception of Nazism and the Holocaust. The non-German popular mind has remained largely immune to those egregious, sophistical interpretations of the Holocaust, as well as to more serious and sophisticated ones that have been evolving within the scholarly community.

The essence of the popular understanding of the Holocaust is that Hitler ordered the genocide, and that his followers persecuted and killed Jews because they hated them. It is a view with which the scholarly community once almost universally concurred. Over the last twenty years, however, it has been increasingly challenged by a growing number of scholars who have come to be loosely called "functionalists." The functionalists have questioned whether the extermination was a premeditated act, whether it was Hitler who ordered the genocide, and whether those implementing it were moved by anti-Semitism,

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to name but a few of the themes being disputed.

The scholars offering these revisions against the conventional "intentionalist" view provide a variety of competing explanations. Sometimes they seek explanations of the Holocaust in the structural features of the Nazi system, denying or minimizing the causal importance of the actors' beliefs and intentions regarding Jews qua Jews, and they reconstruct the sequence of events in a manner intended to show that the causal chain belies the conventional interpretation. The controversy that they have provoked, the "intentionalist-functionalist" debate, has become the central fault line dividing academic interpreters of Nazism and the Holocaust. And much of the debate has focused on close, detailed readings of the historical record regarding one particular issue: when the decision to annihilate European Jewry was taken.

To historians, such readings are the essential elements of analysis and explanation. To many others, however, they may seem to be quibbles over who said what to whom on what date about the Jews. This disjunction is not surprising, for experts and laypeople are typically guided by maps of different contour and detail when lending interpretations and meanings to events, past or present. Even so, this divergence between the concerns of scholars and those of the interested public regarding the Holocaust seems unusually large.

Moreover, the notion that mass murder of such horrific proportions, with its mechanical death factories, was the result not of the Nazis' wish to annihilate the Jews, but of some exigencies of the "political structure" of Nazi Germany that somehow compelled reluctant or half-reluctant Nazis to do away with the Jews, seems to defy common sense, to border on the incomprehensible. For the public, Hitler and Himmler's well-attested and ferocious hatred of Jews is explanation enough. The timing, the circumstances, and the manner in which a premeditated murderer slays his victim has little bearing on the nature of the crime.

Richard Breitman has written a thorough inquiry into this central matter of the intentionality behind the genocide, examining with care the motives for, and timing of, the initiation of the slaughter of the Jews. Along the way, Breitman deals with a number of important and controversial subjects, such as the Nazis' reasons for preferring gassing over the early "conventional" method of mass shootings, the part played by the exploitation of Jewish labor in solving the "Jewish Problem," and the exact course of the Einsatzgruppen's mass murder of Soviet Jews in the summer and fall of 1941, to name but a few. Breitman's interpretations of these subthemes, though invariably judicious, will not always meet with assent. Even historians who agree with his central argument will likely disagree with particulars of his analysis, for the material lends itself to a variety of plausible interpretations. But such disagreements are minor in light of his study's great essential value.

Breitman's book is decisively important because it provides a powerful argument, with both painstaking historical reconstruction and intelligent interpretation, that the central thrust of the functionalist position is wrong. Hitler, Himmler, and the SS did indeed opt for mass murder because the logic of their common anti-Semitism, holding all Jews to be an implacable, mortal danger to Germany's existence, caused them to choose the most thoroughgoing "final" solution imaginable. Because of its general argument, and because of its particular interpretations, *The Architect of Genocide* should serve for years to come as required reading for all who wish to make sense of the Holocaust.

Although formally a biographical treatment of Himmler, Breitman's book is an account of the development of the Nazis' murderous measures against Jews as much as it is a biography in a conventional sense. Breitman rightly conceives of Himmler as the genocide's "architect," whom Hitler commissioned and later monitored. Yet the book could have easily been called *The Genocide and its Architect*, for his focus on Himmler, as he himself states, is primarily on his role in the persecution of the Jews. This is Breitman's personal interest, but there is additional historical and intellectual justification for adopting such a perspective. It was the Holocaust, and the general will to mass murder, that made Nazism more than a brutal, warring dictatorship, Hitler more than a megalomaniacal, barbaric dictator, and Himmler more than a colorless institution-builder and policeman. Aside from the Holocaust, and aside from the concentration camp system, which was Himmler's infernal creation, why would people want Himmler's biography?

Heinrich Himmler was born in 1900 to comfortable, middle-class circumstances. His father, a secondary-school teacher, and his mother, a devout Catholic, ensured that he and his two brothers received a fine education, with particular attention to the classics. Himmler was an able student, and he developed a number of traits in his youth that asserted themselves throughout his life: a methodical attention to detail; a lack of physical self-confidence that contributed to his unease among women; a rigorous self-discipline that he identified with military virtues. He also began to be plagued by recurrent ailments, including chronic (perhaps psychosomatic) stomach disorders. Shaken by Germany's military defeat, and unable to pursue his desired military career because of the Versailles Treaty's imposed manpower ceiling for the German army, Himmler found his calling as a follower of Ernst Röhm, the head of the SA, the Nazi storm troopers. An early Nazi, Himmler participated in the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich in 1923, and in 1929 he became the head of the fledgling SS, the Nazi Praetorian guard

Goya's Enlightenment

We surround him, this poor man from Asia
whom Goya left squatting in the center
of an otherwise blank leaf,

and in the lowered lighting of the room
(dimmed to keep the pencil marks from fading)
I read what's left of his face:

innocent? madman? clown? or imbecile?
a Katzenjammer Kid in karate
robes? a moonchild in eclipse?

He has set his hair on fire until
he gets something—just what doesn't matter—
anything, we're told, will do.

So great is his poverty that he's got
only his locks to lose, and by them gain
his small share of attention.

But I give him only the briefest look—
so much to see—and turn my head aside
hoping he won't realize

I'm afraid to make the decisive move
of breaking the glass and crossing the page
and dousing his flaming thatch

of hair. I step back scorched and stumble through
more galleries, a bald-headed beggar
without so much as a match.

David Bergman

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and eventually the rival and the vanquisher of Röhm and the SA.

Unassuming in appearance and demeanor, Himmler was often underestimated by friends and foes. Shrewd, deceitful, and cunning, yet at the same time a believer in fantastic racial myths and bizarre practices, Himmler rose within the Nazi movement and state, well beyond anyone's expectations. Through masterful organizational skill, astute maneuvering in the treacherous corridors of Nazi power, and a thorough devotion to his leader, he gradually gathered all police and security powers under his control and built the SS, which he imbued with his murderous creed, into the most powerful institution in Germany, rivaled only by the Wehrmacht.

Himmler used his virtually unchecked power in prostrate Europe for a multiplicity of ends that have stamped him one of the greatest, if one of the least flamboyant, mass murderers humanity has known. These ends—genocide, enslavement, despoliation, and the creation of new "men" bereft of "human" qualities like compassion for the weak—all issued from his thoroughly Nazified worldview, at the center of which was a fantasy-prone racism and anti-Semitism, which held the Jews to be Germany's foremost and deadliest enemies. And having seen Germany defeated in the apocalyptic struggle with the Jews, Himmler committed suicide shortly after his capture by the British in May 1945.

The centrality of the war against the Jews for Himmler and for Nazism is also evident in Peter Padfield's highly readable, expansive, and rather conventional biography. A prolific naval historian and a novelist, Padfield's account of Himmler's life and of Nazi history is generally sensible and instructive, and it contains occasional insights into the nature of Nazi society. But side by side with his solid analysis sit some eyebrow-raising assertions. Thus, Padfield maintains that without the active and passive aid of millions of Germans, the catastrophe Nazism wrought would not have been possible, and that Himmler, therefore, ought to be seen in the context of his time. These judgments are sound. But then he tells us that "Himmler, as indeed Hitler, was more victim than creator of the natural disaster that engulfed Germany and the world." It is hard to make sense of this curious statement, particularly in light of Padfield's own emphasis on Himmler's pivotal role in perpetrating Nazism's crimes.

Equally strange is Padfield's tendentious discussion of Nietzsche as one of the intellectual sources of Nazism. The great philosopher is dismissed with this appraisal: "Nietzsche went mad in 1888. He was, of course, mad all the time; his writings were inspired revelations from the deepest subconscious levels of his own psyche which mirrored the culture that produced him." And Padfield's penchant for delving into the murky realm of the psyche is not restricted to Nietzsche. Seeking to bring Himmler to life and to unearth the psychological sources of his behavior, he explores his subject's childhood for clues. Relying on Himmler's early diaries, notes, and letters, and drawing on psychoanalytic theory, he suggests that Himmler was schizoid:

> If schizoid tendencies can be deduced from Himmler's early diaries—and if they appear to be supported by his later career—it may be assumed that he was indeed tortured by inner frustration, anger, and guilt, and persecuted by a cruel "anti-libidinal ego" which caused him sadomasochistic dreams and fantasies, and that in order to obtain relief he was tempted constantly to project those feelings on to the external world.

Even those who are partial to retrospective psychoanalytic diagnoses might find this reading of Himmler ungrounded and, as an effort to explain his singular contribution to mass murder, unilluminating.

Breitman adopts a less speculative approach to Himmler's character. He portrays Himmler and Hitler as complementary figures, in personality and in talents. Their racism and anti-Semitism led each to become obsessed with the "ideal" of extirpating the putative perniciousness of the Jews. Hitler, the visionary leader, conceived and laid down the broad outlines of Nazi policy toward the Jews. Himmler, the able organizer and practitioner, and the master of the SS and the security forces, the major instruments of persecution, turned Hitler's visions (which were also his own) into reality. The relationship between these like-minded mass murderers was akin, in Breitman's entirely appropriate metaphor, to the relationship between a sympathetic patron and his highly talented architect. Like the architect who sometimes executes the newly communicated wishes of his employer, who sometimes anticipates the employer's wishes before they are uttered, and who sometimes himself suggests alterations that are in keeping with the general goals, Himmler too was at once a faithful subordinate of Hitler's and a self-confident initiator of policy, knowing that he could regularly win Hitler's retrospective approval.

Although others contributed to the strategy and conduct of the German war of extermination against the Jews (especially Himmler's subordinates Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Reich Security Main Office under which the Gestapo operated, and Oswald Pohl, in charge of the SS economic empire employing hundreds of thousands of concentration camp prisoners), Hitler and Himmler, in their respective capacities, dictated the campaign's course. Unlike Hitler, who kept aloof from the day-to-day persecution and mass murder of Jews, and who left virtually no paper trail of his direct participation in the genocide, Himmler was in the thick of things, as he was with most of his undertakings. Himmler visited killing sites and even observed massacres. He met, consulted, fought with, and instructed the other major participants regarding the disposition of Jews. If Hitler was commander in chief in this one-sided war, Himmler was both its chief of staff and a field general. He plotted strategy, devised local tactics, and inspected the operations personally. He delivered speeches to the executioners to lift their spirits, and to army generals and party bosses to explain and to justify the murder.

Using heretofore untapped primary sources—above all Himmler's own appointment books and office logs—Breitman provides the best existing account of the making of the decision to annihilate the Jewish people. He argues that the notion of physically destroying the Jews of Germany had ripened within the SS by early 1939 into part of a multifaceted plan to cleanse Germany entirely of Jews. Although the existing borders of Europe meant that concrete planning could not yet encompass all of European Jewry, one already sees at this time the murderous bent in the Nazi ethos animating Himmler and the SS in their thinking and their planning. As the war progressed, and Germany conquered more and more of Europe, the murderous intention broadened its geographic reach and turned into a practical resolve.

Contrary to the arguments of others, Breitman concludes that the transformation and the honing of the murderous impulse into a continent-wide "Final Solution" were not a consequence of the Nazis finding themselves, as suzerains of growing areas of Europe, with more Jews on their hands than they could dispose of. (Had the Nazis not been possessed by Judeophobia, they simply could have employed the Jews profitably in a war economy that was plagued by severe labor shortages.) Breitman's interpretation—more plausible psychologically and, as he shows, in better consonance

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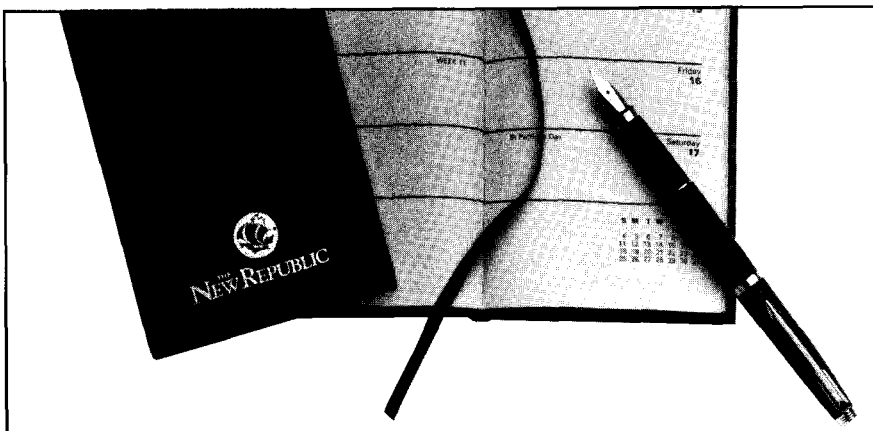
with the evidence—is that the Nazis, with ever more territories and Jews under their control, found ever greater opportunity of realizing their murderous intention for solving the "Jewish Problem" once and for all; and so they now applied, in propitious circumstances, their already articulated murderous intentions for German Jews to foreign Jews as well. Himmler did not become radicalized in his approach to Jews as the war unfolded (as other historians have suggested), because his intention had already reached the ultimate in radicalism. The ideologue of mass murder turned into the practical planner of it.

Breitman does not believe that "the Final Solution was completely predetermined." By my reading of Breitman's book, however, it is an account of how the thinking of Himmler and the SS leadership followed the logic of their beliefs about Jews, and evolved, almost naturally, to the conclusion that total extermination was the desired, nay, the only genuine, "solution to the Jewish Question." For we must learn to ask, however much in disgust, the questions that the Nazis asked themselves—specifically, what would an adequate solution look like? Given the Nazi worldview, such a solution would have to eradicate permanently the "Jewish threat" to Germany's existence. And this would necessitate the irrevocable banishment of all Jewish influence from the world, for (according to the commandant of Auschwitz's recollection of Himmler's words) "if we cannot now obliterate the biological basis of Jewry, the Jews will one day destroy the German people."

The Nazis' rich, phantasmagoric beliefs about Jews included the fantasies that the Jews were the fountainhead of Bolshevism as well as the hidden manipulators of the Western democracies hostile to Nazi Germany. How could Jewish power be destroyed, then, if the Jews, those cunning, infinitely resourceful, bacillilike creatures, remained alive? Well, the Nazis did contemplate sterilizing millions of Jews, which would lead to the extinction of Jewry by means other than outright murder. They also hatched various wild plans of forced "resettlement," according to which the Jews would be quarantined (in order to protect the world) in some distant and inhospitable place where they, the putative anti-social beings that they were, would fall upon each other in internecine predation, and where they would be expected to die in large numbers, if not to extinction. But these bloodless equivalents of physical extermination—which one should note were being mused about while murderous



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policies were already being put into practice—proved to be impractical. So Hitler and Himmler settled upon the surest method: murder.

In light of Hitler's approval of pre-war SS plans to murder wholesale those Jews remaining in Germany (which indicates, by the way, that mass murder was always a live option), and of Hitler's and Himmler's rejection by early 1941 of other contemplated solutions to the "Jewish Problem" as inadequate, and of evidence that some other Nazis knew of such a decision having been taken by Hitler at this time, Breitman concludes that by early 1941 the intended fate of European Jewry had already been sealed:

> The Final Solution was an idea with some roots in the pre-war period. Several key components—killing the Jews of Germany, Poland, and in the conquered Soviet territories—emerged as concrete plans by early 1941, at the time Hitler made the fundamental decision to destroy the Jews of Europe. But they were not implemented immediately, and the overall plan remained malleable into the summer of 1941. In short, the Final Solution came about gradually. Himmler's approval of a specific continent-wide program drawn up by subordinates, however, occurred in late August 1941, after he had settled upon the idea of gas chambers in extermination camps ....
>
> All of this preceded any serious Nazi anxiety about military defeat, and it was largely uninfluenced by practical considerations about the food supply, shortage of laborers, or constraints on the transportation system, which were not too serious in any case. The Final Solution was the direct expression of Hitler's ideology and frequently expressed wish to destroy the Jewish race.

Breitman dates the genocidal decision months earlier than functionalists (and some non-functionalists) who have taken a position in this debate. They generally place the decision sometime in the summer or fall of 1941, after the German war against the Soviet Union was under way. And Breitman's understanding of the motivation behind the decision differs from that of the functionalists, who depict the Nazis as being led or forced by circumstances—among them the scarcity of food in war-ravaged Europe—to murder those whom they would have preferred to dispose of through emigration or resettlement.

At the heart of the disputes over the intentionality of the Nazis' attempt to exterminate the Jews of Europe, and over the timing of the various steps that produced an ever wider and more comprehensive death toll, are disagreements about complex issues not always addressed directly by the protagonists, such as the nature of an "intention," the influence of ideology on action, and, not surprisingly, how to read the surviving historical record. Those who date the various exterminationist decisions later than Breitman tend to assume that decisions had not been taken until the Nazis' behavior can be shown to have been uniformly and unequivocally in line with an exterminationist policy. They adopt this position even though they know, and often emphasize, that the chaotic institutional structure of the Nazi regime and the fierce rivalry among its various satraps frequently produced fragmented policies and inconsistent actions.

Breitman, by contrast, often assumes a different stance, derived in part from his understanding of how Hitler and Himmler operated, which sees conflicting Nazi behavior to be sometimes the result of a delay between a policy decision and its transformation into uniform and, in this case, across-the-continent measures. He also recognizes that the implementation of intentions, even of actual policy decisions, are often purposely deferred (and even hidden from subordinates) until favorable conditions obtain. Some read the coincidence of such circumstances and of policy implementation as evidence for the absence of a prior intention to undertake the measures. Breitman often dissents from this view, reasoning that if evidence exists of prior intentionality (in authoritative publications, in correspondence, in records of meetings, in credible postwar testimony), then we sometimes should conclude that previous intentions did indeed exist and that they are the crucial element for explaining and understanding the behavior.

It is well known that obstacles often prevent leaders from following the most desired course, and so they settle for a second- or third-best plan of action, at least temporarily. The so-called Euthanasia Program, in which the Nazis killed more than 100,000 mentally debilitated and physically infirm people, mainly Germans, because their infirmities were considered inimical to the health of the German nation, was such an instance:

> In mid-1933 the Nazi regime issued a law providing for the involuntary sterilization of genetically suspect individuals. In 1935 Hitler told his personal circle that he supported euthanasia but the political opposition was too great: perhaps it would be easier to implement such measures in wartime. The SS newspaper, *Das Schwarze Korps*, called for euthanasia in 1937, and SD official Albert Hartl, a former priest, investigated the issue and the likely political reaction of Catholic authorities in 1938.

The "Euthanasia Program" did not begin in Germany until October 1939, when the war was expected to conceal it from view. It is a clear example of an ideologically derived policy intention that was implemented well after the intention was formed, when the circumstances, which included calculations of the deed's political consequences, became auspicious.

No one can deny that motive often precedes opportunity, that intention often depends upon contingency for its implementation, that politicians and leaders adapt their goals, even redefine and expand upon them, in consonance with changing circumstances. So it is difficult to understand why the adjustment of Nazi policies to changing circumstances—when even their "bloodless" schemes for solving the "Jewish Problem" had extinction as their purpose—are interpreted as evidence that the Holocaust did not grow organically from Nazi ideology. On January 30, 1939, for example, Hitler declared himself a "prophet" and proclaimed in a speech to the Reichstag that a world war would end not with "the victory of Jewry, but the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe." If this was his intention, then why did he not then act upon it? Breitman explains:

> A program for the complete destruction of the Jewish people depended upon so many unrealized preconditions—military conquest of major European opponents, subjugation of most of the continent one way or another, availability of a suitable technique for mass murder and sufficient numbers of executioners, commitment of resources, ability to keep the whole process secret—that it is hard to see how anyone, even Hitler, could have made any kind of commitment, privately to himself or confidentially to others. Hitler was a fanatical anti-Semite, but he was also an opportunistic politician. He would undoubtedly seek to unleash his rage at the Jews; how and when he did so depended upon the circumstances, opportunities, and plans presented to him. Anyone planning a campaign of mass murder had to start thinking on a smaller scale than the continent.

As Hitler was pronouncing his genocidal "prophecy" (which he would publicly refer to and repeat nine times between January 1, 1942, and March 21, 1943, while the mass murder was at its most fevered pitch), he clearly harbored murder in his heart. But the actual policy decision, and the organizational measures to implement it, were necessarily deferred until the requisite conditions had been realized.

If the functionalists were saying only that the proper circumstances were nec-

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essary for Nazi ideology to bear its genocidal fruit, then there would be little argument, except over the details of chronology. But they (and it is worth emphasizing that the functionalist label covers a variety of people and arguments) are generally saying more. They are arguing that during the war, for one reason or another, the Nazi hand was forced—that circumstances did not merely unleash a pre-existing motivation to be acted upon, but created a new one, a will to mass murder where such a will had not previously existed. In the words of Martin Broszat, one of the people most identified with this line of argumentation, the killing "began not solely as the result of an ostensible will for extermination but also as a 'way out' of a blind alley into which the Nazis had maneuvered themselves." In this view, the Nazis killed Jews haplessly, because they did not know what else to do with them.

But circumstances or structural features of the system no more compelled or induced the Nazis to murder the physically and mentally infirm in the "Euthanasia Program" than they could cause Hitler, Himmler, and the SS to seek the extermination of European Jewry. Both sprang from a common, purely ideological source: the racist conviction that the world ought to be biologically purified. Before 1941, for pragmatic reasons, the Nazis did toy with other, functionally near-equivalent solutions to the "Jewish Problem" before settling on genocide, and so the road to Auschwitz was not taken without seeming detours and side excursions. Yet the Nazis, even if at times casting about in this uncharted domain for the proper path, always knew the end they were seeking: a Germany no longer threatened by Jews, which required a world purged *completely* of "Jewish power," hence of Jews. That the world could and must be redeemed by extirpating all that is defective, impure, or inimical was an article of faith of the Nazi creed. It was not an aberration of Nazism; it was its very essence.

We should bear in mind that the Nazis conceived of their task as having to overcome the most powerful evil force in human history. Objectively speaking, they opted for a policy that had no precedent: the annihilation of an entire people, totaling millions, that was scattered among and integrated into the population of an entire continent waging war against Germany. Seen in this light, it is no wonder that even the Nazis, the consummate mass murderers of European history, groped about a bit before finding a sure footing on the way to continent-wide extermination.

The "intentionalist-functionalist" controversy, by focusing on the chronology of the Nazi treatment of the Jews and on pinpointing the motives behind the successive stages of the persecution, has increased our knowledge and improved our understanding of Nazism and the Holocaust. Yet it is worth remarking that the popular view, which is scarcely aware of the learned disputations, retains a clearness of vision that is sometimes lacking in the scholarly disquisitions. The great virtue of Breitman's book consists in its demonstration, by means of a scrupulous and painstaking scrutiny of the evidence, that the popular view is by and large correct, that (to paraphrase the charter of UNESCO) the Nazi genocide began in the minds of men, principally in the minds of Hitler and Himmler. The rest is commentary.

DANIEL JONAH GOLDHAGEN is completing a doctoral dissertation at Harvard University on the Nazi executioners.

Apocalypse Now

BY SVEN BIRKERTS

Almanac of the Dead by Leslie Marmon Silko

(Simon and Schuster, 832 pp., $25)

Leslie Marmon Silko is a Native American of the Lagunas tribe of the Southwest. Her 1977 novel, *Ceremony*, not only established her as one of the most gritty and imaginative Native American writers, but also had considerable crossover appeal for the larger audience of serious readers. The novel, which charted the re-entry struggles of a World War II veteran returning to his New Mexico reservation, brought together naturalistic narrative modes with the more startling mythopoeia of the indigenous storytelling tradition. Largely on the strength of that work, Silko was awarded a 1981 MacArthur Foundation fellowship.

Hefting Silko's new novel, *Almanac of the Dead*, one readily guesses how the writer passed her last decade. It is a megalith, a two-hander; certainly it is one of the most ambitious literary undertakings of the past quarter century. Silko has ventured nothing less than a paper apocalypse, a vivid enactment of the long-prophesied collapse of white European domination and the simultaneous resurgence of the Native American peoples of much of the continent.

The reader will have to bear with me as I chalk out the basic perimeters of the plot. There is simply no other way to take hold of the design, or to gauge the scope and implications—and, ultimately, the failure—of the vision that Silko has attempted.

The author has divided her 700-some pages into six sections, as follows: "The United States of America," "Mexico," "Africa," "The Americas," "The Fifth World," and "One World, Many Tribes." Though the vast populations of characters cross from one section to another as readily as they cross the U.S.-Mexican border, each of the units has it own focal and thematic center. A look at the two principal sections—the first two—might begin to suggest the dynamics of the whole. To attempt any more would be like describing Rodin's *The Gates of Hell* figure by figure.

The main action originates from and returns to a heavily fortified ranch outside Tucson, Arizona. Lecha and Zeta, 60-year-old twin sisters of Mexican-Indian extraction, rule the roost. Zeta, working with Lecha's estranged son, Ferro, directs a sizable smuggling operation, trading in drugs, illegal immigrants, and, later, arms.

Lecha, recently returned from years of wandering, is a psychic with a peculiar gift: she receives visions of the recently deceased. For some time she practiced her art on live TV, but one day her trance description sets her packing her bags:

> Lecha describes the gardens of Xochimilco, with the water lilies, yellow and pink blossoms, and the reeds and cattails parting gently to the prow of the small flat-bottomed boat. Then up ahead she sees a bright red and yellow woven-plastic shopping bag floating in the dark green water. There are two large objects visible through the plastic netting. But here the talk show host interrupts, afraid that the Indian woman is just killing time, setting him up with a dumb story about

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floating gardens and floating trash. "So far I don't see this one making next week's headlines," he says, and is gratified when the studio audience laughs at his cleverness. But Lecha does not hesitate. She repeats the sentence he interrupted and immediately there is silence, and Lecha has them on the canal as the little boat draws even with the brightly colored shopping bag. Inside the bag are two human heads, their eyes open wide, staring at the sky.

The heads belong to the U.S. ambassador to Mexico and his aide, and Lecha is savvy enough to know that when ambassadors die, the CIA gets active. She returns to the ranch to work at transcribing the fragments of an ancient document, the Almanac of the Dead, sacred to her people, which has been bequeathed to her by her old Yaqui grandmother. Embedded in the text, in gnomic form, are prophecies about the second coming of the Indian peoples.

The first section—indeed, the first two-thirds of the novel—is less concerned with plot development than with stage setting. For her design to work, Silko must populate an enormous canvas, and this means introducing characters, figuring the ever more complex relations among them, and eventually bringing them into position for action. Thus, in addition to the sisters, we meet Seese, a desperate young druggie who has come to Lecha for help in finding her abducted child; Sterling, the Indian caretaker who has been banished from his pueblo after he betrayed the whereabouts of a sacred stone snake to a Hollywood film crew; Paulie, Ferro's assistant and lover (*Almanac* is a veritable "Satyricon" of late-century sexual and narcotic practices); Calabazas, Zeta's one-time smuggling partner who now supplies Lecha with her Demerol fixes. You get the idea. I have merely mentioned these players between semicolons—in the novel we get major excursions into their present lives and their pasts.

The second—"Mexico"—section revolves around one Menardo, a marvelous character who dominates the page with his appetites and his energetic, if foolish, scheming. Menardo is a mestizo from Chiapas. Mortified by his telltale flat nose, he flees from his origins, becoming in time the founder of an immensely successful insurance business. His claim to distinction is that he will insure against anything, even revolution. Menardo boasts his own army, air force (several planes), and arsenal, not to mention close contacts with the most powerful men in the state.

Menardo is also a married man, and when he decides to build a grand house for himself and his wife, he topples one of the many strands of narrative dominos around which *Almanac* is constructed. He falls promptly and passionately in love with Alegría, the architect assigned to the project. Their affair, at least from Menardo's side, begins in an almost uncontrollable anticipation:

> She had talked almost non-stop to the hotel. Menardo could only watch her breathlessly, because when Alegría was talking about her vision of what the new house could be, her face and her hands—her whole body— were vibrant. Suddenly Menardo felt sweat rolling down his sides, sliding over his ribs and soaking the top of his shorts and trousers.

Alegría, whom he eventually marries, has links through her lover, Barolomeo, to Marxist revolutionaries (draw the dotted lines to the two heads in the plastic bag). His private driver meanwhile, an Indian named Tacho, happens to be the keeper of the sacred macaw birds, which impart to him the secrets about the coming insurrection of the Indians. When the great day comes, it will be Tacho's twin brother, El Feo, who will march at the head of the rising masses.

In addition to the Tucson and Chiapas contingent, *Almanac* abounds in outlandish characters, each of whom is positioned to play a part. We meet any number of shady dealers and middlemen, brokers of arms, drugs, and pornography, who will line up behind anyone who holds enough cash. There is also Leah, wife of the powerful ex-Mafia figure Max Blue, who is quietly buying up immense tracts of Tucson real estate with the idea of building a Venice of the West, complete with canals and gondolas. And Trigg, *her* lover, the wheelchair-bound founder of Biomaterials, Inc., a company dealing in the international body-parts and plasma trade. And Roy, alias "Rambo," a Vietnam vet with plans to mobilize the legions of America's homeless into a people's army.

But enough. Let me say in Silko's praise that she has the storyteller's gift for weaving and interlocking anecdotes. Although little actually happens through the first two-thirds of the book, apart from the dense exposition of deals, allegiances, and past histories, the narrative moves forward with the kind of incremental edginess we find in the novels of Robert Stone. The lines between private vice and political corruption cross and criss-cross. There is a mounting sense of destinies converging, of great events taking shape just over the horizon line of the page. Alas, it is the events themselves that disappoint the (necessarily) dogged reader-accomplice. But since the novel is not a simple failure, some explanation is necessary.

For all of its Churrigueresque surface intricacy, the structural premise of *Almanac of the Dead* is fairly simple. Silko has spliced two types of narrative—two ways of seeing the world, really—into a DNA-like braid. One string is the naturalistic—the straight-on, if somewhat heightened, depiction of Western society in its declining phase (the novel is set in the unspecified present). We see our lost and ugly culture through the stories of some of its seedier representatives—Zeta, Ferro, Menardo, Max and Leah Blue, Trigg. They are the oppressed who are intent on wreaking vengeance, the fallout of late-period capitalism, foreshadowed in Marx. As one character, a Mexican revolutionary, puts it, Marx was "a storyteller who worked feverishly to gather together a magical assembly of stories to cure the suffering and evils of the world. . . . Stories of depravity and cruelty were the driving force of the revolution, not the other way around." Those stories come alive on every page of the novel.

The other narrative cable is the mystical-prophetic. Rooted in the sacred traditions of the Native American people, not anchored to simple chronology, this orientation is visionary. It is represented by Tacho and his macaws, who speak the prophecies of "The Reign of the Fire-Eye Macaw," as our era is known. And by Lecha with her second-sight. And by the symbolic utterances inscribed in the fragments of the Almanac:

> There were the very poor people who did not escape when the oppressors appeared, when the anti-Christ had come to earth, the kinkajous of the towns, the coyotes of the towns, the blood-sucking insects of the towns, those who drained the poverty of the working people. But it shall come to pass that tears will fill the eyes of God. Justice shall descend from God to every part of the world, straight from God, justice shall smash the greedy hagglers of the world.

The last third of the book attempts to bring the naturalistic and prophetic modes together, to show how the fiery visions in the Almanac are borne out, but also to show just how the catastrophe is rooted in material necessity as well. Silko's ambition is enormous. She wants to have the governments and corrupted cities crumbling away from their own degeneracy and at the same time to convince the reader that the sacred stone snake has bestirred itself and brought the hour of regeneration to hand.

To pull this off, Silko reverses narrative emphasis. The patiently assembled webwork of deals and conspiracies is overwhelmed by the rush of prophesied

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catastrophe. Silko tips all her dominos at once. In Mexico: El Feo gathers his army of disfranchised Indians and begins marching north. In Tucson: drug busts, bombings, and murders all coincide with a freakish gathering of shamans, shams, and would-be revolutionists at the International Holistic Healers Convention. And running like a jagged stitch through these chapters are the extracts—many of them nonsensical—from the Almanac: "Eight is the day called the Dog. Bloody pus pours from the ears of the dog," etc.

It should be as much work to untie a fictional knot as it has been to tie it. But Silko moves with such haste that she sacrifices much of the credibility she had amassed. Where before we had slow exposition, we now catch abrupt bulletins: "The Mexican president had declared a state of emergency as thousands and thousands of war refugees from the South were spilling over Mexico's southern borders." The novel ends in a welter of deaths and departures, all of them too sudden.

Silko's writerly gifts are such that one wishes she had found herself a better vehicle—or at very least had spent more time fine-tuning the present one. A novel can only achieve so much synthesis and remain readable. That the oppressed of the world should break their chains and retake what's theirs is not an unappealing idea (for some), but it is so contrary to what we know both of the structures of power and the psychology of the oppressed that the imagination simply balks. Similarly, while Silko's descriptions of the myriad ways that corruption chases cash are convincing enough (nothing could strain credulity on this score any longer), her premise of revolutionary insurrection is tethered to airy nothing. It is, frankly, naive to the point of silliness. The appeal to prophecy cannot make up the common-sense deficit. While it is true that a great deal of fiction is an enactment of wish-fulfillment scenarios, it is also true that little of it is of the first order.

Still, the subject is serious and the author is impassioned, and one must remark the enterprise. Native Americans *have* been violated and humiliated beyond belief. The figures that Silko quotes, as well as the snippets of the historical record she includes, tell of massacres that curdle the blood. Between 1500 and 1600, North, Central, and South America lost over 60 million people. Most of them were Indians. As Calabazas tells his friend Root:

> I have to laugh at all the talk about Hitler. Hitler got all he knew from the Spanish and Portuguese invaders. De Guzman was the first to make lampshades out of human skin. They just weren't electric lamps, that's all. De Guzman enjoyed sitting Indian women down on sharp-pointed sticks, then piling leather sacks of silver on their legs until the sticks poked right up through their guts.... In 1902, the federals are lining up Yaqui women, their little children, on the edge of an arroyo. The soldiers fire randomly.... Walk through those dry mountains. Right now. Today. I have seen it. Where the arroyo curves sharp. Caught, washed up against big boulders with broken branches and weeds. Human bones piled high. Skulls piled and stacked like melons for trail markers.

The tragedy and the rage at tragedy that underwrite *Almanac of the Dead* are very real. They have spawned in Silko's mind an epic of collapse and retribution—and implied regeneration. Unfortunately, her narrative proliferation—at which she excels—forces her to extremes of resolution. The reader grips the edges of the book as though they were the steering wheel of a vehicle careening out of control. Led into so many lives and fates, we are distressed to have them shorn from us so suddenly. Yet there would seem no other way, short of devising a denouement as comprehensive as the exposition. The answer for Silko might be to prune and prune until her tree of apocalypse stands in clear outline against the sky.

SVEN BIRKERTS's *American Energies: Essays on Fiction*, his third collection, will be published next year by Morrow.

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 6*

Working from within

To the editors:

The efforts at military reform that culminated in the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which enabled General Norman Schwarzkopf to achieve the unity of command in Desert Storm, were not generated outside the armed services by such people as Senator Gary Hart, as Gregg Easterbrook contends ("Operation Desert Shill," September 30), but rather from inside the armed services themselves.

Historically, both the Army and Air Force have wished for the sort of full unification finally achieved in Goldwater-Nichols. At the close of World War II, Generals Marshall, Arnold, Collins, and Norstadt, along with two deputy secretaries of the Army, Lovett and Patterson, fought for just this sort of unity of command. They were, however, totally frustrated by the service intransigence and political abilities of the Navy, which led to triplification of the armed services. These, as Mr. Easterbrook so correctly points out, resulted in a series of disasters from Vietnam to Grenada.

The unification plan was actually proposed by General David C. Jones, who had just retired as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1984. He and a few other courageous generals and admirals pushed the service reform plans both through the mechanisms of the Joint Chiefs and before Congress. Armed with the Goldwater-Nichols legislation, Admiral William Crowe, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was able to grab the recalcitrant Navy by the scruff of its neck and hurl it into the twentieth century.

ARTHUR HADLEY
New York, New York

Big Freddy

To the editors:

I was shocked to see a writer generally as well informed as Ronald Steel, and a journal as fastidious as TNR, refer to King Frederick the Great of Prussia as an "emperor" in the article about his recent reburial ("Checkpoint Freddy," September 30).

"Big Freddie," as he is still known, semi-familiarly, to aficionados of eighteenth-century flute music, was never an emperor, although three of his Hohenzollern descendants did bear that title between 1871 and 1918. In fact, he was barely a second-generation king, his grandfather having been a mere Elector of Brandenburg until he finagled a royal title for his (extra-Imperial) holdings in East Prussia. In those days the only emperor to be found in any German-speaking country was the Habsburg ruler of Austria, still known (despite the jibe of Freddie's occasional guest and pen pal, Voltaire) as the "Holy Roman Emperor."

CARL PFLUGER
Stratford, Connecticut

To the editors:

Ronald Steel reports without comment that the new watering spot in East Berlin is The Oscar Wilde, a "Traditional Irish Bar."

Any chance the Berliners are unaware Mr. Wilde was hardly a traditional Irishman, except for his tendency to dress funny?

MICHAEL O'MALLEY
Alexandria, Virginia

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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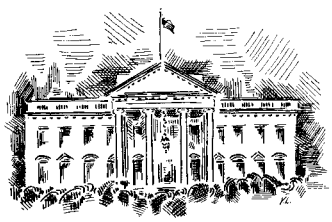
WASHINGTON DIARIST

What a whopper

CLARENCE THOMAS HAS WON HIS seat on the Court, but he has forfeited his honor and besmirched his country. He did so beginning on Friday, October 11, when the Senate Judiciary Committee and the global television audience returned from the dinner break to hear what he would have to say in response to the long, sad, calm story told by Anita F. Hill. Until that moment I had favored his confirmation—not because I thought him well qualified or liked his ideas, but out of a pragmatic calculation that whoever President Bush might nominate next would be less likely to grow in directions displeasing to his sponsors. Even after Professor Hill's testimony, I still hoped, rather wanly, that Judge Thomas would be able to explain. I hoped he would say that the whole thing was a ghastly misunderstanding—that Hill had bizarrely misinterpreted a 33-year-old divorced man's clumsy attempts at courtship and ribald humor. Or, failing that, if he felt total denial was his only recourse, that she was evidently suffering from a severe delusion, that she needed help and deserved compassion, and that, by the way, the content of her delusion provided heartbreaking evidence of the internalization by some blacks of oppressive stereotypes. He did not say these things. Instead, he played the card of racial paranoia. In Thomas's telling, Hill's contentions were not delusions; they were "lies." The proceedings were not a painful and (given the unauthorized leak of Hill's FBI report) unavoidable airing of one woman's nightmarish fantasy; they were "a high-tech lynching for uppity blacks who in any way deign to think for themselves, to do for themselves, to have different ideas," or to refuse to "kowtow to an old order." He was being "lynched, destroyed, caricatured"—not for his alleged actions but for his ideas, and not by Hill's story but "by a committee of the U.S. Senate."

THE NEXT MORNING THOMAS LISTened approvingly as Senator Orrin Hatch wove a lurid tale of a monstrous conspiracy by "interest groups" and "slick lawyers" to program Hill, Manchurian Candidate-style, with a viciously racist story pieced together from bits of old law cases and pulp novels. As Andrew Rosenthal has reported in *The New York Times*, this line of attack was a calculated strategy devised—hatched, so to speak—in the White House, with Bush's approval. It was a deliberate lie, as Hatch, Bush, and of course Thomas must have known—and as was indisputably proved on Sunday, when four associates of Hill's gave unchallenged testimony that she had confided in them about Thomas's behavior as long as a decade ago. Joseph Biden, the chairman of the committee, who handled the hearings with skill and patience, tried to let Thomas back away from it. In a colloquy that has been little noted, Biden gave Thomas every opportunity:



Do you believe that interest groups went out and got Professor Hill to make up a story? Or do you believe Professor Hill had a story, untrue from your perspective, that, as referred to here, groups went out and found? Which do you believe?

Senator, I believe that someone, some interest group, I don't care who it is, in combination, came up with this story and used this process to destroy me.

Got Professor Hill to say, to make up a story?

I believe that in combination this story was developed, or concocted, to destroy me.

With Professor Hill? That's a critical question. Are you saying, with Professor Hill? That a group—?

That's just my view, senator. There's no details to it or anything else. The story developed. I do not believe—the story is not true. The allegations are false. And my view is that others put it together and developed this.

And put it in Professor Hill's mouth.

I don't know. I don't know how it got there. All I know is that the story is here and I think it was concocted.

BY EMBRACING THIS POISONOUS accusation—that Hill's story was concocted, as opposed to merely unearthed, by "interest groups" working "in combination"—Thomas showed himself to be unfit for the powerful office he may well occupy into the 2030s. The accusation is worse than unproven: there is not a hint of a shadow of a fact to support it. In making it, Thomas displayed both a coarse contempt for the very concept of evidence and a stunning readiness to slash at the fabric of democratic trust. This should have been reason enough for the Senate to reject his nomination, even if it is stipulated that he was entirely innocent of Hill's charges. But of course that cannot be stipulated. It is close to a certainty that she was telling something like the truth and he was not. She had no motive to lie; he did. There is no evidence that she is a vengeful woman, a fantasist, or even a Democrat; there is considerable evidence that he "discussed pornography" with and forced his unwanted attentions on, other women too. For Thomas's version of their encounters to be true, Hill would have to have invented an elaborate delusional structure; for her version to be true, he would have only to have repressed (or rationalized away) a few troublesome memories. She would have to have been a psychotic; he would merely have to have been a man in a tight spot—which, manifestly, he was.

ONE THINKS, IN THIS CONNECtion, of Tawana Brawley, and of Al Sharpton. Brawley began with a relatively small lie, designed to save her some grief at home: some white men abducted her, and that's why she was out all night. The lie grew, to distract attention from its own inconsistencies. Enter Sharpton, and the small lie became a big lie, until an entire community was riven by racial bitterness and demagogy. To question Brawley's tale was to become a party not only to her victimization but to the victimization of black women by white men since the beginning of time. Thomas's lie—that nothing remotely resembling what Anita Hill said happened, happened—started out smaller than Brawley's. But it grew much bigger, big enough to engulf a nation, and by the end Thomas was telling an audience of tens of millions that he was being lynched, assassinated, and destroyed; that "our institutions are being controlled by people who will stop at nothing"; that the Senate was "ruining" the country"; and that he, Thomas, was the victim of a malevolent, racist conspiracy so immense that it encompassed much of the political universe. Today Tawana Brawley is a minor celebrity on her college campus, and Al Sharpton remains a prominent "activist" in New York. They haven't done badly. But Clarence Thomas has done better. He is a Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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Great Ideas Are Not Enough

BY ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

America 2000, President Bush's program for revitalizing our education system, asks many of the right questions, and that's important. For instance, one major focus of attention is how we can change our schools so that American students will do at least as well as kids in other industrialized countries. (If we didn't know it already, the recent National Report Card shows that our kids are miles behind.) But will the strategies that are being proposed do the job?

In order to create "break-the-mold" schools, America 2000 has set up the New American Schools Development Corporation, a nonprofit organization funded by business contributions. It will award contracts to groups of "experts"—"R & D think tanks, school innovators, management consultants and others"—who will come up with innovative ideas for totally new kinds of schools.

Now, I agree that nothing is needed more than a new model for our schools to replace the factory model that's been around for 100 years. We need schools that will reflect the fact that children learn at different rates and in different ways, schools that allow for differentiated staffing and make use of the new technology that could revolutionize both teaching and learning. But what makes us think this is the way to do it? Previous efforts to break the mold haven't worked. The education history of the past 20 or 30 years is filled with examples of revolutionary new schools, funded by private or foundation or government money and designed to solve education's most serious problems, that have disappeared without a trace into education's equivalent of the Bermuda Triangle.

Revolutionary new schools have regularly disappeared without a trace into education's equivalent of the Bermuda Triangle.

A recent story from *Education Week* (September 25, 1991) about the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "New Futures" project may be a case in point. The foundation planned to spend $50 million over five years to reform inner-city schools in five American cities and make sure that troubled young people had the services they needed to improve their school performance. But three years later, apparently many of the leaders of the project are discouraged by what they've accomplished: Reading scores are about what they were when the project started; math scores rose slightly but then fell back to their original low point; black students continue to fail at a far higher rate than white students; and average daily attendance has not improved. What's wrong? The Casey people had lots of good ideas, enthusiasm and money. The project may still live up to original expectations—after all, it's only been going for three years. But so far it seems to be a disappointment.

I'm not saying that trying new ideas is not worthwhile, but innovation alone is not a solid basis for dealing with our problems. The first thing innovators need to do is to spend time analyzing past failures. They could fail anyway, but if they've done their homework and know where the excellent ideas of the past have gone wrong, they are less likely to do so. This is important advice for America 2000.

For example, it's not enough to have a good strategy; you have to be able to pay for it. And in the past, plenty of good ideas have failed for lack of funding. Will the money for America 2000's break-the-mold schools be there over time or will the corporate funding run out in a couple of years? What guarantee is there that even successful programs won't end up in the trash can because there's no money to continue them?

Another thing to consider is that many past efforts—including some of the state school reform strategies of the 1980s—failed because they were top down. Some smart people got together, figured out how they thought education should change and turned their ideas into a master plan for people in the schools to carry out. Will America 2000's plans be more of the same—except that they'll be adopted by the school board and superintendent (and perhaps the union leader) instead of the state? No scheme ever works unless the people responsible for carrying it out want to make it work. You have to get their whole-hearted support, and if you don't, the plan is likely to be the victim of unintentional sabotage, no matter how brilliant it is.

Overpromising is another problem. Americans are optimistic people, and they also want results in a hurry. So education reformers have often claimed far too much for a new idea. Doctors don't do this. When they come out with a new drug, they are careful to say, "Here's what tests show us this drug will do, but we still are not sure about long-term results and possible side effects. We need to do more testing." As a result, people do not expect too much too soon. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander understands the dangers of overpromising. As he goes around the country selling America 2000, he admits that maybe some of the ideas we try won't work. Unfortunately, some of the Administration's written material about America 2000 is full of hype, and this could backfire.

We need a new kind of school. If we keep working at it, we'll get there, but we need to be smart enough to take advantage of the mistakes we've made in the past as well as the bright ideas we have today.

MR. SHANKER'S COMMENTS APPEAR IN THIS AD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS. READER CORRESPONDENCE IS INVITED. ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS TO MR. SHANKER AT THE AFT, 555 NEW JERSEY AVE., N.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20001. ©1991 BY ALBERT SHANKER.

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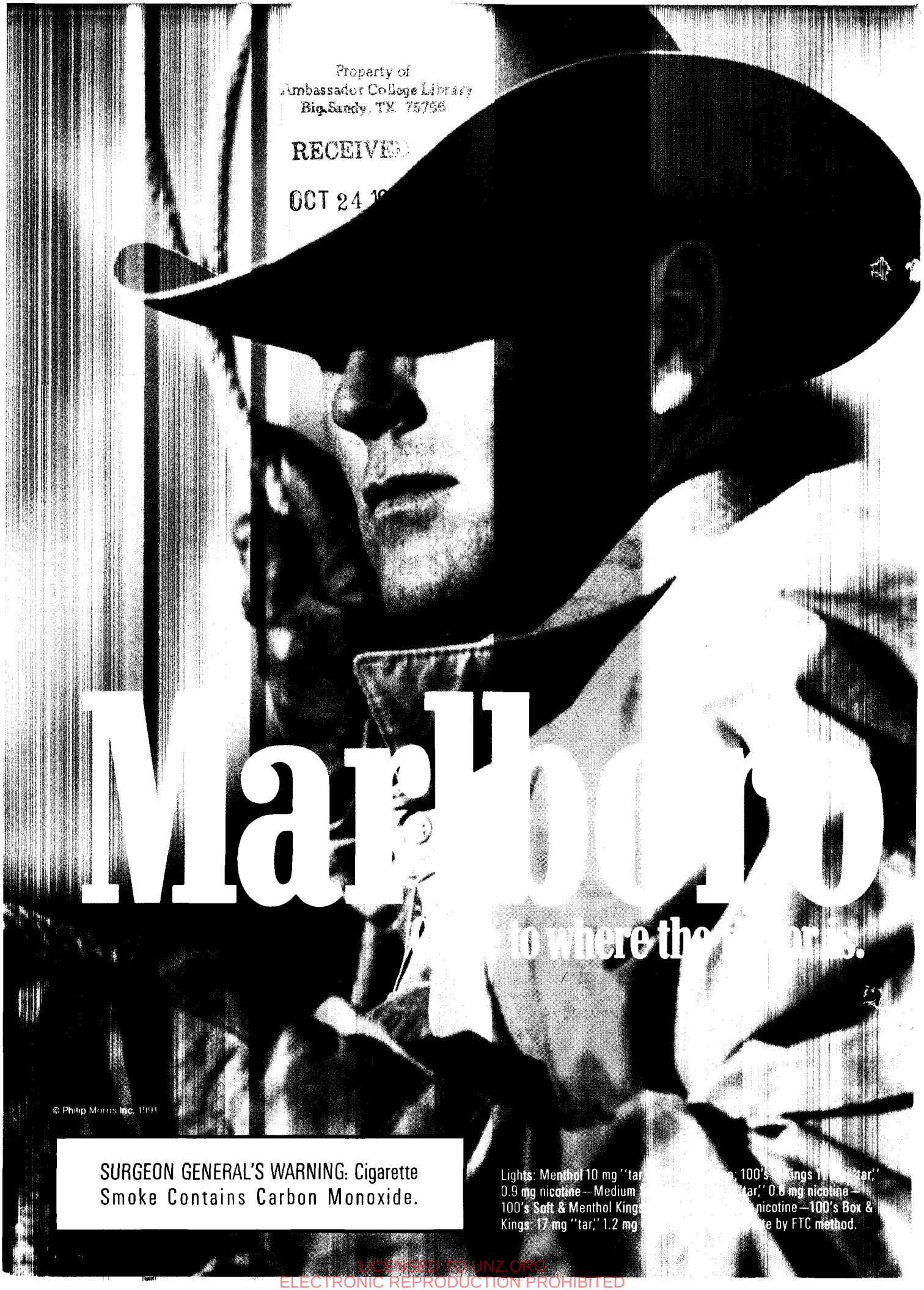

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